

Femme Fatales

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JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES

MICHELLE WILLIAMS
DEBI MAZAR

"HALLOWEEN" SCREAMER JAMIE LEE CURTIS

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You won't want to miss our next monthly issue as Elvira makes her annual Halloween visit to *Femme Fatales*. Elvira reveals her stand-up gigs with Phil Hartman, her role in a James Bond movie, her *Fallen* move and talks about her new 3-D film and upcoming TV series. It's lavishly illustrated in the Elvira tradition, just in time for Trick or Treat!

Plus, also in the same issue, Sandra Bullock on starring in PRACTICAL MAGIC, director Griffin Dunne's sage of wiseass witches, a preview of *Tara Crisp*, TOMB RAIDER, the hot femme Indiana Jones who is up for her own movie franchise, Tess Reed and Alice Witt on URBAN LEGENDS, the latest in teen horror, and Playboy's Shoe Masks. Subscribe today!

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The Luscious Ladies of Horror, Fantasy & Science Fiction

NOVEMBER 1998

11:00 AM Det Pegez for Jenny, aka for me. We're both pretty steamed. See, we just screened a TV retrospective of the 100 Best that the American Film Institute has gauged as "the best". Sure, we're elated with CITIZEN KANE and, most especially, dark horses like DUCK SOUP and FRANKENSTEIN. But Jim is ticked that neither Robert Altman's THREE WOMEN nor Roger Donaldson's (very sensuous) DR Jekyll & Mr Hyde qualified. Me, I was incensed that neither SONS OF THE DESERT nor Brian De Palma's Hunt's A CHRISTMAS CAROL—our KISS ME DEADLY—made the cut. Midway through the broadcast, we made a bee-line for the kitchen and returned to the TV to see, inexplicably, President Clinton as one of the show's hosts. We later assumed that Clinton had to pock his face—most likely PORKY'S—and CANNONBALL RUN—into the Top Five.

11:15 AM During the past 5 years, FF has served as a sponge: William Morris producers often consult us for casting. The latest request is pretty soufflé: a Brazilian sex unit needs 3 actresses, ages 19-24, for a PG-13 romance with a comic book/dentist background. Lead? Supporting? Demographically, the producers are appealing to the same audiences drawn to Jennifer Love Hewitt as well as this issue's HALLOWEEN H2O players, Michelle Williams and Joely Lynn O'Keefe. But would readers, male and female, don't inexplicably cling to "teen idol" nepe, they also inappropriately about hip forty-something James Lee Curtis (page 42) and producer Debra Hill (page 41) whose original HALLOWEEN transmuted a game that thrice prospered, wore out its welcome and was later reborn and assimilated into a new generation of SCREAMERS. Welcome to the crossover.

We're acclimating ourselves to a new schedule: an issue of *Femme Fatales* will soon be released every 3 weeks. I thank our writers for making this possible. One staffer, the fowly Laura Schiff, has somehow managed, only last week, to get down with Carrie Fisher, Tracy Lords, etc. for some absorbing interviews. You go, girl! See you next month...

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HALLOWEEN'S DEBRA HILL

PRODUCER OF THE '78 CLASSIC RECALLS A TINY BUDGET AND THE TEST SCREENINGS.

BY JORDAN R. FOX

Debra Hill, the daughter of an art director who worked on many of Hope and Crosby's *ROAD* pictures, functioned as a script supervisor on 14 features, before edging into some editing and second unit work. Her gigs included *ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13*, John Carpenter's 1978 sleeper *Hill* and Carpenter subsequently collaborated on a script titled titled *THE BABYSITTER MURDERS*. Assigned the formidable task of squeezing raw talent out of a diminutive budget (little more than \$300,000), Hill was credited as producer. The film, released in 1978 as *HALLOWEEN*, was a critical and commercial smash, grossing close to \$56 million. Hill later produced 28 movies, many linked to the horror/sci-fi genres (*THE FOG*, *HALLOWEEN II & III*, *DEAD ZONE*, *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*, *ESCAPE FROM L.A.*)

With her '78 legacy celebrating its 20th anniversary, Hill recounted production of the original *HALLOWEEN*.

Are horror and suspense among your major interests?

I don't want to become the "Queen of Morbid Terror," as John [Carpenter] calls me. But I do have a natural feel for the genre. Anything that can touch the audience, get them involved—that, to me, is the excitement of movies. It's bigger than life.

I think I write horror well [screenplays include *THE FOG* and *HALLOWEEN III*. Maybe it's just a sadistic streak in me. I remember I once said to John, thank

God he can get his outlet for killing women in a movie. Think if it was supposed!

Have you found any resistance or discrimination as a woman producer?

I'm not the kind of producer who puts a package together and finds money for it. I'm strictly a line producer. Once the project is decided on, I deal with getting all the elements together to make the best picture possible. A lot of times, executive producers are people who deal with getting money but know nothing at all about budgetary problems, shooting problems or how to read a board. My background is in film, so if a soundman comes to me and says, "I need..." I speak the language. That gets respect.

What was it like, being a first time producer on *HALLOWEEN*?

I knew I had it in me, but I was scared. John and I surrounded ourselves with people who I knew and who he knew. They were pulling for

HALLOWEEN: Carpenter and Hill take a break on the steps of the Myers house. **HB:** "This movie was not a *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*—there's no blood."



Hill and John Carpenter rehearse a striking scene, 1978. "The most fun was not having much money."

me. If I had had to step into a foreign group of people, I may not have done as successfully.

The job of making the picture was very challenging, but it was fun. I think the most fun was not having much money, which forces you to use your imagination and be innovative.

I had done second unit directing, so I knew what it was like to be a crew boss. The biggest problem was doing out money to friends, having to say, "No." These are people with whom you spent years complaining about the

ducers of other films and, all of a sudden, the tables are turned.

You didn't regard a low budget as an inhibiting factor?

Too much money separates you from your crew. If you have a lot of money, you just hire people, send out the optics, bring in someone for the music—instead of being involved, yourself. It's not coming from you.

How do you get maximum value from a tiny budget?

John and I worked for

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FATALE

BY LAURA SCHIFF

Though still unconfirmed, Steven Spielberg is rumored to be a prospective director for Paramount's live-action adaptation of *TOMB RAIDER*. If true, it'll please fans of the top-selling Eidos interactive video game, some of whom have openly wondered if screenwriter Brent Friedman (*MORTAL KOMBAT: ANNIHILATION*) is up to the job. *The Craft* Times' website (www.craftnet.com/tcm.htm) says the film is "surely sloping into the winged hands" the first blow at the hopes of those who wished to see a "serious" movie in the songwriter [sic], Mr. Friedman." I, for one, am not so quick to condemn Friedman, who has promised to tell me his side of the story just as soon as a final draft of the script has been completed. Fans again found themselves in a lousy when rumors circulated that Paramount considered *Playboy* Playmate Anna Nicole Smith as Lara Croft, the female equivalent of Indiana Jones. As it stands now, Paramount's lead contender for the role is British actress Elizabeth Hurley. In a recent online poll, 784 voters cast their ballots for the *AUSTIN POWERS* babe. No surprise, *TOMB RAIDER* R model Rhona Mitra placed first with 3,279 votes out of 4,000 possible, 8,880, followed by Sandra Bullock with 1,028. Hurley ranked third. *TOMB RAIDER* is scheduled for a '99 release.

• James Cameron, *TITANIC* director and self-proclaimed "king of the world," is currently developing a screen adaptation of Anne Rice's *The Mummy*. According to Tom Cohen of Lightbeam Entertainment, "*THE MUMMY*" is a project that we are developing. It's nowhere near the pre-production stage. We have a writer who's working on a script adaptation of it at this time. It's a project that Jim is producing." Rice's novel is about Egyptian pharaoh Raamesses the Great, who, having imbued the "elixir of life," is destined to forever wander the earth. A wealthy heiress falls in love with the resurrected king, but he only has eyes for his old flame, Cleopatra, whom he foolishly resuscitates from the dead. On Rice's official web site (www.annericase.com), the acclaimed author had this to say about the project: "[Cameron] is one of the most brilliant directors in Hollywood. I feel like *The Mummy* will reach another incarnation in Jim's hands, and that my destiny is to go on and write about ancient Egypt and careers and innumerable... and the things that really intrigue me about Egypt in a novel and different form." Rice speculates *THE MUMMY* will roll in 2000.

• The year was 1981. Sleazier films were creating to a splattering crescendo. Emerging from this decade of misogynistic violence came Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*, the horrifying novel of a yuppie serial killer whose idea of a good time is torturing women to death in his chic New York apartment. I, a diehard horror fan, was so disturbed by the book that I could scarcely manage to read a page a day.

Seven years later, sleeker films were declared a commercial liability and feminists heaved a sigh of relief. Thus, it seems very odd that *American Psycho* is now experiencing



PP cover woman Traci Lords (top) plays a loathsome role in *BLADE* (above). Lords updated PP on her career (movies & music) in an interview that will be printed later this fall.

ing a resurgence of popularity. Even odder? A woman, until recently, was angling to envision this ultra-violent tale for the big screen. Mary Harron (J SHOT ANDY WARTHOL) was attached to direct the film from the very beginning. Then, at this year's Cannes festival, Lions Gate Films announced that *TITANIC* star Leonardo DiCaprio had signed on to play the sadist. The National Organization for Women released a statement deploiting the film's production, and Harron was abruptly dropped from the project. Both Gus Van Sant and Curtis Hanson were mentioned as replacements. Other drop-outs include actors Christian Slater (*GATTACA*), Willem Dafoe and Jared Leto (*MY SO-CALLED LIFE*). The latest wrinkle is that DiCaprio's people are now denying that Leto is making the movie.

• The latest member of Club Nosferatu is Traci Lords, who plays a vampire in the upcoming *BLADE*. The plot? A mortal woman is bitten by a vampire while giving birth. The infected infant matures into Blade (Wesley Snipes), an outcast who's neither human nor vampire. And his intent on killing the vampires who slaughtered his mother and raised his life. The \$45 million *New Line*

production, adapted from a Marvel comic book, opens this month.

• Universal and Imagine Entertainment continue to be less than forthcoming with info related to *Gun* Van Sant's *PSYCHO* remake. Will Anne Heche—Ellen DeGeneres' better half—be playing hapless bathing beauty Marlon Crane? Heche's spokesperson had no comment, and the actress declined to be interviewed. Nicole Kidman was initially offered the role (played by Janet Leigh in the original 1960 version), but apparently turned it down to co-star with Sandra Bullock in Warner Bros.' *PRACTICAL MAGIC*.

• Lloyd Kaufman, co-founder of *Troma* Entertainment, conceptualized the premise of his latest project while recounting a 25-year career of producing no-budget, subversive films. *TELETHON FIRMER* chronicles the skinned, behind-the-scenes, N.Y. tableau of a movie shot on a shoestring—cheap special effects, messy food, complicated stunts and stories having zero with golfers! The film promises to contrast "the obnoxious sex and violence in low-budget movies with the infinitely more disturbing realistic sex and violence in the city." Don't even spot the fade-out scene, but the crew rescues Manhattan from a serial killer.

• Hollywood stunt woman Dana Hee—who has doubled for Nicole Kidman, Geena Davis, Pamela Anderson, et al.—will likely star in Fox's TV series *MORTAL KOMBAT: CRUSADES*. "It looks very promising that I'll be playing a leading role," Hee reports, "but it's still too soon to say." The role would afford Hee the latitude to utilize her martial arts training: she won an Olympic gold medal for full-contact karate in 1988. "It's really hard to find good martial artists who can pull off a role and say a few lines," says Hee. "I think this show is perfect for that. They need the good martial artists, but they also need people who can do dialogue. It's going to be a lot of fighting, a lot of visual effects and some really cool characters!" Hee previously played Maxima in the feature-length *MORTAL KOMBAT: ANNIHILATION*. Look for my interview with Ms. Hee in an upcoming issue.

• Amy Jo Johnson, best known as "Kimberly, the pink Power Ranger" in TV and film, is currently shooting *COLD HEARTS*, a horror movie by fledgling writer/director/producer Robert Madsen. Ms. Johnson plays Alissa, a young anarchist vampire who refuses to feed off of vampires at a seedy family reunion. Instead, she is forced by her undead shun, Victoria (Marisa Ryan, *Detective Neil Delaney* in *NIGHTWING*). The two vamps were deep into production of press time, but we'll check in another week or two.

• The Fox Network is searching for an actress, age 10 to 12, to play Regan in a two-part, four-hour miniseries that reworks *THE EXORCIST*. According to Fox publicist Joe Early, the role of Regan's mother has not yet been cast. William Peter Blatty, author of the novel that was adapted in-

to a 1973 blockbuster, has penned the screenplay and serves as executive producer. Geoffrey Sax will direct. This miniseries, filming on Toronto locations, will be broadcast in February or May '99.

• Fox has picked up 13 episodes of HOLLYWOOD, the brainchild of SCREAM director Wes Craven and singer-turned-TV producer Shaun Cassidy. The series follows the lives of two friends who solve bizarre homicides in Los Angeles; it all translates into entertainment for their weekly reality-based TV show transmitted from an Ohio cable station. According to Diane Groat, the show's director of publicity, "the pilot is being retooled" for broadcast. My sources tell me the reshooting encompasses a new cast and a different director. The show airs on a 9 PM Thursday night slot, this fall.

• Congratulations to actress/presenter PFF cover woman (B-4) Tami McCuller, who is expecting her first child sometime this month. Says the mom-to-be, "After my marriage ended, I started dating this other guy, Gary Arendt, and I got pregnant about a month after we became intimate, poor guy! I love Gary, but I got so burned by [ex-husband] Shane that I'm not so keen on getting married again." McCuller assures me that motherhood will not deter her from making movies: "I've been working out a lot to keep my body in shape." McCuller was five months pregnant while filming a cameo role in GO, a \$6.5 million film that is already garnering a big buzz in Hollywood. "I play Holly, a sympathetic stripper," she says. "It's a minor role, but a good, dramatic one. I could actually hide my pregnancy okay, but people who have seen my walks in the past will think I've gained about fifteen pounds." The producers were very supportive and sweet, and they thought I did a very good job." The film, directed by Doug Lanan (WINGERS), is a comedy about the events that transpire after a drug deal, re-coated—RASHOMON-style—from three different points of view. McCuller also goes into the inside scoop on her small role in Terry Gilliam's FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS. "I originally had a bigger part, but with all the characters in that movie, it's no surprise I ended up just being [on screen] for about two seconds. I played this sexy girl who later turns into a lizard during Johnny Depp's drug trip." Meanwhile, TRANCE—the mobster/magician hybrid that McCuller produced for her own Triplex Films—has encountered unexpected delays. Distributor J.L. Media has been plagued with financial difficulties, but, promises McCuller, "The movie will be out by the end of the year."

• Kathryn Alexander, another FEAR AND LOATHING alum, recently lined a pilot for Fox called SHOT CHASERS. Starring Arsenio Hall and Diana Leathman, the action comedy involves an odd couple in pursuit of criminals who violate law, says Alexander. "I have a featured role as an informant who is feeding information to one of the skip chasers. It's a funny show and I



Julie Strain (p.2) strips a pose as Marilyn Monroe for her "Trading card heroine." Marilyn 2000, The B-Queen recently wrapped LINGERIE RUCKSACKERS.

hope it gets picked up." The pilot is directed by Michael Ritchie (FLETCH).

• B-movie queen Julie Strain unveiled her Comic Images trading card set, Marilyn 2000, at the San Diego Comicon... similar to her previous Bettie 2000 card set—an homage to Bettie Page—Strain poses as that other 1950s icon, Marilyn Monroe.

• Also attending Comicon, actress Athena Massey (A & E's SISTERS) pitched a preliminary "sexier" version of her own comic book, Athena, which she created with partner Brooke Wachtel. Among the premiere issue's scenarios, she reveals, "Aries, god of war, has come to Earth, and he's put in motion a plan to destroy civilization and plunge humanity back into a barbaric dark age of endless conflict. To stop him, Alvera, the warrior goddess, inhabits the body of a mortal woman, transforming her into a superheroine. Her only ally is a secret agent named Jonathan Drake. The romance sparks fly between the two of them as they pit themselves against the massive dark forces of Aries. The goddess and the secret agent face both earthly weapons and Olympian monstrosities, in an effort to uncover Aries' diabolical plot and save the world from destruction." Massey is busy inventing with publishers and "will make a decision, later down the line, who we're going to go with for publication." The actress and Wachtel are also adapting the comic book into a screenplay.

• America, say hello to Bike Jensen: you're gonna be seeing a lot of this Swedish bombshell, who has crossed from print to the movie medium. Says the former Versace model and Miss Germany pageant winner, "I will be in the Guinness Book of World Records next year because I was a Playboy Playmate, in every country on 'er' list continents." Back in 1996, Jensen launched a gig as co-hostess of a popular Italian game show, COLTO GRANDE. "When I was shooting the series in Milan, Sylvester Stallone was shooting CLIFFHANGER, yet he flew in a helicopter from his set to my set to visit with me. It was in all the newspapers." COLTO GRANDE was subsequently picked up by German TV station RTL, and broadcast all over the European continent as TUTTI FRUTTI. Landing in America sometime around 1998, Jensen earned her SAG card playing bit parts on BAYWATCH and in WAYNE'S WORLD 2. "Recently, I co-starred in the movie MIDNIGHT HEALING [from Salsano Entertainment]," says the lingerie. "It was the biggest movie I ever did. I had 46 lines. That's a lot for me." Jensen is now the proud owner of a red leather suit, the official BAYWATCH trademark; she's performing more guest shots on the series. The beauty has also been informally asked to appear in a still-unitled "bikinis & bikinis" film by Andy Sideris (THE 4 & 21), though no official casting decisions have yet been made. "This movie that is coming up, ya? It is an action movie with all the martial arts. I am doing kickboxing and stuff like that. They were looking for athletic types, and I'm very sexy and athletic. But I would never, ever do a cheap, low-budget movie where I am nude and I have to act like I have sex. But if it is with a big star? For sure I would do that!" "Duh?"

• FEMALIA! Jennifer Venessa Talor (B-5) was cast as Ava Gardner in PRANK SINATRA: THE B-TRUE HOLLYWOOD STORY, a documentary tailored for E! Entertainment that originally premiered last June (check your listings; it's scheduled for a re-air). "It was an honor to be cast as a legendary actress," says Talor. "The producers said they saw something in me that had a 1940s movie star essence. As Ava Gardner, I reenacted scenes from her life with Frank Sinatra. These dramatizations were combined with actual clips as part of the documentary on Sinatra's life."

Talor is now gearing up to play a member of an all-girl rock band in Full Moon Entertainment's THIS BLOOD CALLS. Says the actress, "It's about this contrast who turns people into dolls. He's got a five girl rock band that he keeps in a cage. With his slaves and we play our instruments on command. I'm the keyboard girl." The film will be co-produced by Michael Copeland's Arik 21 Records, and marks the music label's first foray into producing feature films. A CD tie-in with the movie is already in development. This is all great news for Talor, who's a classically trained pianist.

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Vanessa Lachey is literally hot on one of the Solaris Streets. "Diane Palacio photographed me in Death Valley," says Lachey. "It was scorching!" The actress is cast in Full Moon's BLOODDOLLS. "It's an all-girl band meets mad science."

JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES

MEET SANDY KING, FEMME PRODUCER OF SCI-FI AND HORROR MOVIE ENTERTAINMENT.

BY JOHN THONEN

The making of a movie is similar to the mounting of a military campaign. Both begin with intensive planning, followed by assembling and mobilization of the forces. And, more significantly, both are dependent upon the guidance of a leader whose strategy is immunized to dispute. On the set of JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES, producer Sandy King is a surrogate General Patton. King, however, prefers a self-damaging rank: "glorified wrangler" Shelly Lee (TWIN PEAKS), cast as "Katrina," cuts through the humility: "Sandy's fantastic. She's there every day, in the trenches, with cast and crew." Robin Michel Bush, the film's costume designer, notes, "From a crew member's viewpoint, she is one of the best producers there is. She gives you the feeling that if you have to run behind a trailer and get sick, she wants to be there to help you. Sandy makes your job so much easier because you're not stressed out over



Sandy King, producer of sci-fi stupor ON THE MOUTH OF MADNESS, VAMPIRES, et al. "We need to like a lot at the big top."

a lot of issues. You just know that she has taken care of them and that whatever else might come up, she'll will take care of that too." Director John Carpenter's admiration of Ma King is rather unprecedented: he married her.

VAMPIRES details the warfare between Jack Crow (James Woods), a vampire hunter whose "search & destroy" mission is sanctioned by papal authority, and

Valek (Thomas Ian Griffith), the father of all blood parasites. Both opponents struggle over Katrina, a beautiful prostitute who—as a survivor of Valek's attack—furnishes Crow with a psychic link to his adversary. But time is the essence: Katrina is cracking under Valek's malevolent influence.

Perusing the VAMPIRES script, it dawns on me that Katrina is the only female character afforded more than a few words of dialogue. The only other functionally tangible femmes are a trio of seven vampire masters played by Anita Hart, Marjean Holden and Cris Thom as Palamino, the latter a stunt veteran with 18 years experience. The director regards them as more than a predatory presence. "My feeling about vampire movies is that if you don't have sex, it's not a vampire movie," explains Carpenter.

But beauty had to be matched with a panache for performing stunts. Carpenter and King relied on their frequent stunt coordinator, Jeff Imada, to ferret out talent who could mix charac-



Vampire Masters & an undead posse

terization and athletic prowess with equal conviction. Holden, profiled in FP 45, and Hart (page 19) optionally audition for acting and "body double" roles.

Bush attired the vamps in velvet and silk brocade, fabrics that you want to touch, I think that comes through on film, but, beyond that, I don't know that I had a lot to do with the sensuality. Sandy cast people who were so gorgeous. Marjean [Holden] is about 5'11" and built like nobody's business. Even if you put her in a costume that's not intentionally sexy, it's just her spirit and strength that shines through. It's very easy to make her look good."

But the production couldn't coast entirely on synergy. There were problems right from the start. Large Entertainment, purveyor of G.I. JANE and MEET WALLY SPARKS, wanted the film to wrap before the end of their fiscal year. To meet the completion date, the film had to be in pre-production by April '97. There was only one obstacle. Large Entertainment. "The biggest challenge at the outset was getting the green light," relates Sandy King. "It's a joke real-



Vamps include Cris Paskoski & Marjean Holden (far left). The \$20 million film's unbridled violence provoked controversy.

ly. They bring a project to you and want you to start right away. You knock yourself out getting it ready to go, and then you can't get the 'okay' to actually start.

"People have this romantic notion about there being more freedom with the independents. What it really means is that they have less money. The hardest thing is getting the schedule and budget to meet the requirements of the production, and the financial entity funding it."

John Carpenter bristles when reminded of Largo's foot-dragging: "Everybody thinks they know how movies are made. They have no idea. Right to the end, they keep negotiating with you. It's happened one way or another on almost every movie I've made. That's the way I do business."

Mr. King concurs. "Making movies is hard work. But the rest of this crap, it's just brain damage."

In preparation to get casting under way, King made a furtive visit to a film premiere. "James Woods was outside being interviewed. He was yok-

ing about wanting to be the next action hero and I'm sitting there thinking, 'You know, that could work!' A vampire killer, surviving as a mortal, would have to have elements of coldness and darkness to rival a vampire. So often in a horror movie, the monster is the most interesting character. We tried to offset that with James Woods' character, who's equally fascinating. We didn't want it to be, 'Oh, he wins because he has the better weapon' or because God is on his side." Not this time. He wins because he is as tough, or tougher, than the monster.

John Carpenter directs Thomas Ian Griffith (BEHIND ENEMY LINES), cast as bloodthirsty Valek. "He moves like a panther," notes King. "I thought, This is vampire!"



"People have a romantic notion about there being more freedom with the independents. What it really means is that they have less money."

CONQUEROR) landed the role of bloodthirsty Valek. "He moves like a panther," enthuses King. "He has this quality of physical grace and animal magnetism that is so charismatic. I thought, 'This is a vampire!'"

The explicit carnage in VAMPIRES—some of it so hyperbolic to be surreal—may prompt the MPAA to freebase on *Tylenol*. Nevertheless, Marjean Holden was "sad when it ended. I didn't expect to be so connected to Sandy and John. Sandy is very different from a lot of producers. She's very much about the people and treating them with respect. It's a team and, being from an athletic background, I can really relate to that."

The fraternization of cast and crew may be attributed to Carpenter's filmmaking philosophy: "It's all about 'we,'" he explains. "I'm not an autocrat, telling everyone this is my vision and it has to be this way. Everything goes through me, but I delegate authority as much as I can. I let people do their jobs and we make decisions together."

Behind-the-scenes revelry also deflated tension. Listen to Karen Costa, who has been King's friend since they were neighbors at the age of two: she's also been John Carpenter's assistant for the past 11 years. "We had two stages going in Santa Fe," recalls Costa about the VAMPIRES shoot. "One of the girls who was working for [special effects crafts



A: Sheryll Lee as Katrina, vampire hooker. B: Executing a bloodbath (critic Harry Knowles: "Horrible, Maka ass!") C: King & Carpenter's assistant, Karin Costa

man Greg Nicotero had this blood-filled super soaker." Costa borrowed the gun and walked up to King who was managing second unit work. "Sandy didn't realize it was blood at first, and she threw some bottled water on me."

"Karina laughed that I might have got her, but she squirted me with blood."

Sandra Ann King and John Carpenter posing for Carpenter's late brother, 1988 (the couple wed four years later)



continues King. "Right then, one of Greg's guys handed me another super soaker of blood and we ran from one stage to the other, just spraying blood and screaming appropriately horrendous language."

"So you've got two 40-something women running around spraying the entire stage," grins Costa. "At one point, Sandy spun around to spray me and hit this truck. They had just spent two days aging the thing for a scene, and it would take another 24 hours to fix it. We stopped, looked at each other and both thought we were dead. Then Sandy smiled and says, 'Wait a minute. I'm the producer!'

Graduating from UCLA in 1973, King was soon hired as an animator for the Oscar winning film, *ANTIMATTER*. Film production work followed, initially as script supervisor for a number of adult films shot during the 70s. "Believe it or not," King laughs, "some of them did have scripts." She graduated to more mainstream, low budget fare, including *THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN* and *BLUE SUNSHINE*. King eventually plied her trade with

Roger Corman, who was then officiating New World. "I came up through the ranks," she recounts. "I was a crew person, a unit manager, second unit director, even an associate producer on a shark documentary."

"Sandy worked as a script supervisor for about 15 years," says Costa. "She worked for Francis Ford Coppola, Michael Mann and Walter Hill. Her reputation was that if she wasn't the best, she was one of the best."

"I worked for Francis on *RUMBLE FISH* and *THE OUTSIDERS*," notes King. "He's just a brilliant man, and I love him dearly. He's my second favorite director. I married my first favorite."

"On the other hand, we've all worked on films with some guy who seems to have an overwhelming urge to keep telling you how big his dick is. I mean, hey!—who cares? I would wonder why, when we were working so hard, these people couldn't be cooler. It doesn't cost anything to not be an asshole. In fact you gain a lot in morale."

King was introduced to Carpenter while working as script supervisor on the di-



rector's *STARMAN* (1984). The relationship soon blossomed. Debuting as associate producer on Carpenter's *THEY BITE* (1985), she developed her own code of ethics. "I'm kind of old fashioned. I really believe that production exists to serve the director's vision...and to serve the crew, so they can help meet that vision. Let's face it, thousands of student filmmakers prove, every year, that you don't need a producer to make a film."

Exempting *ESCAPE FROM L.A.*, King has produced all of her husband's post-'88 movies. Regarding their rapport with the crew, she relates, "John and I are pretty loyal. We've actually been known to reschedule our productions so we can work with someone we like to use. We choose these people because we think they are the best, and we have a

"I thought [John Carpenter] was a great filmmaker from the get-go. Then I found out that he was a great man, too. And then I fell in love with him."

good working relationship. That saves a lot of time by eliminating in-fighting and the 'get acquainted' period.

"The primary allegiance has to be to the film. A lot of us came up through old Hollywood training. There is one captain of the ship, and that's the director. I know when John'll be hesitant to ask for what he really wants, because he thinks it's too much money. So I know to look for a way to do it. It's a life I value, being with someone I love and respect. The respect came first. I thought he was a great filmmaker from the get-go. Then I found out he was a great man, too, and I fell in love with him."

Though King only works her crews on five-day weeks, Carpenter has wrapped each film on schedule. VAMPIRES was no exception. "Sandy does a lot of nice things for the crew," says Costa. "About midway through a film, morale tends to get down. But, on VAMPIRES, Sandy rented an entire restaurant for her and the crew to eat, drink and watch the Mike Tyson fight. On one Sunday, she got Sheryl Lee and the other women in the cast, and the girls from the office, and took them all to a spa for a little pampering."

Sheryl Lee insists that King's personal and professional congeniality is far from traditional. "Sandy should run a school that all other producers are required to go to. Then they could learn how to do their jobs well and still be decent human beings."



Top: King and Carpenter, on the set of BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA (1986), with producer Larry Fink. Below: Sandy King (aka Mother Production)



Bottom: King, Carpenter and Keith David look on the skins on a bench from THEY LIVE. The husband/wife team are developing a documentary on Howard Hawks



After years of being squeezed into a Travelodge room with five to six other crew persons for some Cormac production, King provides quality housing for her personnel. She's even arranged for the cast and crew to lodge with their families. Adhering to genuine streak of compassion, King also realizes that Good Samaritanism translates into good business. "Say you're a jerk, that you don't give a damn about anyone but yourself. Then just be pragmatic about it. If people are happy, and having a good weekend when they aren't working—and if they have their families there—don't you think they are going to work better? I don't think you can help but benefit."

Anita Hart concurs: "John Carpenter and Sandy King were both very kind. Sandy has no negative attitude, and you just do a better

job." Friends since age two, King & producer friend Kristin Costa (as kids). During VAMPIRES, both engage in a squared-off, bloody showdown.



better job when everyone's easy to work with."

Sandy King doesn't bask in the glow of all the valentines. She's too busy. "It's cool what we do, it's magic. I still get excited just to drive down the highway at night, and see somebody who's shooting. I want to know who they are, what they're doing. I'm like a kid at the big top. It still excites me."

Cris Thomas-Palomino on VAMPIRES

MEET THE STUNT WOMAN WITH BITE: SHE TOOK A FLYING LEAP OFF THE "TITANIC" AND SURVIVED "THE STAND."

BY JOHN THONEN

She describes her role in John Carpenter's film as "The old hag vampire." It's a self-abasing description that she applies to her elder status among the actresses cast as Vampire Masters. But I don't buy it, especially after she peels-off a few layers of gauze. Cris Thomas-Palomino, stunt woman, is beautiful; unfortunately, her face is routinely camouflaged behind an inferno of flames, a burst of smoke or a few layers of latex.

Palomino launched her career as a competitive gymnast in school. Auditioning for the CONAN show at Universal's theme park, she negotiated her love of acrobatics into a support system for paying the rent. "I was this conservative little Orange County girl, and I walked into an audition of 700 women," Palomino recounts. "It was my introduction to the Hollywood look: big hair, big boobs and leopard skin clothes [laughs]. I was just this slim little thing in a leopard and shorts, but I could tumble circles around them." Palomino was cast as one of five ensemble players for the live stunt show. Her co-workers, many of whom



VAMPIRES: Excessive's (l) ready to take a bite out of visual coordinator Jeff Daniels. The toothsome cast also includes Maren Holden (PP 46, behind Daniels) & Andie Mac-

moonlighted as stunt performers for film projects, advised the ingenue to show her stuff as a body double.

"My first film was THE GOLDEN CHILD ('86)," she recalls. "I doubled Charlotte Lewis—and I didn't have a clue what I was doing. But they kept paying me so I kept coming back." Palomino's 5-foot, 8-inch height worked to her advantage. "Pretty soon, I had my own little niche. If they needed

to double an actress who was 5-foot, 8-inches or taller, they pretty well had to come to me." Other genre-related gigs have included INDEPENDENCE DAY, HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE and MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN.

Hired for EXCESSIVE FORCE ('93), Palomino climbed down the exterior surface of a farm house and then dodged a speeding car. At the time, she was three

months pregnant. "It went OK, but it was my last stunt until after I had the baby. I realized I wasn't getting out of the way as fast as usual. It was the extra weight."

Her work on JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES wasn't as demanding as past jobs—at least until she, and the legion of Vampire Masters, were buried alive for a scene that cues their resurrection. "There was so much weight on your chest that you had trouble just breathing," sighs Palomino. "I'm claustrophobic as hell and the box over my face collapsed at one point. I'm lying there thinking, 'If I say anything they will think I'm the biggest baby in the world,' but I just couldn't breathe and I had to sit up!"

Demonstrating her own flair for macabre, Palomino so claims to have been more upset about blowing the shot—on her first day—than the prospect of suffocating. "I felt like I had to prove myself after that, but I really didn't have any tough stunts to make it up with." Nevertheless, she impressed producers with a fight scene that concluded production: "I had to do a



A: Palomino (l) and Co-star Velik (Thomas Ian Griffith). B: Rehearsing the vampires' resurrection. While filming the scene w/ Marjean Holden (r), Palomino almost buried herself alive! "They buried us. As I went to rise, the weight held me down. I could picture my black dress tearing and me rising from the grave in a box."

'big bulldog': that's where you run and leap onto someone beneath you. I was on a fountain, and I had to run and dive onto one of the priests and take him down. It isn't really that tough a stunt but, as a gymnast, I knew how to sell it. Everyone seemed pleased and I felt a little better about having let them down before."

While the initial take of the "burial alive" sequence proved unnerving, memories of its subsequent shoot evoke laughter. "They tried burying us even deeper one time," grins Palomino, "and I had on this long black dress. Well, when I went to rise, the weight on the dress was holding me down. I could just picture it tearing away and me rising from the grave in a bra and tights. My dress ended up all stretched out from pulling it free. When I came up, I looked at Marjean [Holden, page 24] and the whole back of her dress was missing—it just tore loose! We just fell apart laughing."

While the untrained would peg the collapsing box



as a physical risk, Palomino quickly points out that her life wasn't in jeopardy. "They had a headrest macrophone buried by me, and the crew was everywhere. If I had called for help, they would have had me out in a second." She heaps praise on stunt coordinator Jeff Imada. "I'd do anything for Jeff," she gushes. "He won't ask you to do anything that he hasn't tested first himself. Safety is his first priority."

Safety, in fact, is the operative word in Palomino's business. "You have to cover your butt. I double check

everything. You can't paint fingers. You have to be responsible for yourself." She reveals that the death of stunt woman Sonja Davis, killed while performing a high fall for *VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN*, continues to haunt her. "I looked into it. I've got three children and I intend to go home to them after every job. I wanted to know what went wrong and if it could happen to me." She learned that Davis' tragic death was primarily a result of inexperience. "Sonja pushed out at the top and that makes an arc, so you

end up further out at the bottom than you were at the top. She only had 15 feet clearance to a brick wall." Not long afterwards, Palomino—as one of an army of stunt performers—was engaged to do a 45-foot fall from the deck of the *TITANIC*.

Precautions notwithstanding, the stunt woman is still burdened with her share of injuries. She suffered her worst damage while shooting the 1984 masterpiece, *THE STAND*. "I cracked my pelvis and broke my back," Palomino says matter-of-factly. "We were supposed to go flying over a porch railing after an explosion, but it was too strong. It wasn't supposed to be a barn stunt, but we were engulfed in flames. I could feel my arms and my face burning. I wasn't thinking as clearly as I usually do. I slipped off the porch, but I came down wrong. It was a 10-foot fall onto my back. They had to back-board me and take me out in an ambulance. It's the only time I wasn't able to walk off the set under my own power." □



Margjean Holden on VAMPIRES

WITCH, CYBORG, 4-ARMED WARRIOR. OFF-SCREEN: STUNT WOMAN, ACTRESS, ROLE MODEL (NO DRUGS, NO BOOZE).

BY JOHN THONEN

Six feet tall, athletic, classically beautiful. Little wonder that Margjean Holden is visually translated into superwomen. Last year, she was cast as Sheeva, a four-armed martial arts warrior, in *MORTAL KOMBAT ANNIHILATION*. During the past few years, her rogue's gallery of femmes fatales expanded into a sorceress (*SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT 4*), a cyborg (*NEMESIS*) and an avenger (*BALLISTIC*).

Making her debut in *BILL AND TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE* ('91), Holden has pendulously swung from shoot-'em-up to sci-fi thriller, the latter including *PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT 2* (she replaced Courtney Cox as the lead) and last year's *DEEP SPACE NINE* episode, "Empok Nor." She augments her income by working as a stunt woman, though Holden's physical prowess sometimes earns her featured roles. "I was actually supposed to work with [stunt coordinator] Jeff Imada on *MORTAL KOMBAT ANNIHILATION*, but he wasn't able to do the show. I got a call from him later, informing me that he was doing a flick for John Carpenter titled *JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES*. He asked if I

wanted to play a vampire and I said, 'Sure!'"

Imada was adhering to a casting communiqué issued by Carpenter and producer Sandy King; the couple were looking for "beautiful people" to play the film's cadre of Vampire Masters. Imada slipped them one of Holden's head shots. "By the time I got home, my pager was going off and my phone was ringing," recalls Holden. "I'm thinking, 'Hey, I guess I get it.' I love vampire films. There is just something so intriguing about that whole realm."

Robin Bush's costume and an application of KNB's effects/makeup impacted the actress: "There's something very sensual about it. John [Carpenter] wanted us to be very alluring, even appealing. It's easy to be self-conscious about that kind of thing. But when KNB was done with the makeup, it was like, 'I'm transformed into this incredibly powerful female.' If anybody can ever know what it truly feels like to be a vampire, then this was as close as it gets. I truly felt like someone who walked the night."

The cosmetic transformation also affected the cast/crew solidarity. The actresses hired to portray the Vampire Masters were accusa-



VAMPIRES T. Holden, in New Mexico, backed by "Vampire Masters" Anita Hertz, director John Carpenter, stunt coordinator Jeff Imada, producer Sandy King, & B. Yates (Thomas Ian Griffith) huddles with Holden (l) & bloodsuckers.





L to R: Marjean Holden as Vamp; Marjane (Anita Hill, R.) have vampiric likes. There's something intriguing about the whole mess.



R: Marjane (Anita Hill, L.) & Marjean Holden (Holden & Hill).

comed to wolf whistles and double-takes. But the whole predatory, "banged femme" freaks really brought out the beast among the opposite sex. "Guys would just walk up to Cris [Pakarino], Anita [Hill] and I, tilt their heads and say, 'Okay, you can bite me. Right here, on the jugular.'

"We were doing a scene in a monastery, and we're killing monks and this and that. One of KNB's assistants was playing one of the monks and I was supposed to be biting his neck. They had to keep yelling at him, 'Joe, will you please stop smirking?' —she's supposed to be killing you."

Holden's recent stunt work has included a risky "high fall" into the ocean for *SPEED 2*. But *VAMPIRES* challenged the actress with her most difficult "gag": to date actors hired to portray vampires were actually buried beneath a foot of desert soil. "They had dug seven holes," relates Holden. "Then they laid us down, and literally started shoveling dirt over us. There was a little box over our face to give us some air, but it wasn't much because they wanted to see us rise, and you can't have some big box in the shot. It was just two flaps that came down so

that dirt didn't get in our eyes and so there was a little pocket of air. It was the hardest thing I've ever done stunt-wise."

The film's curriculum on Vampire Extermination 101 includes exposure to sunlight. But the resultant big meltdown—i.e., bloodsuckers who "see the light" explode into flames—isn't Holden's preferred demise.

Thomas Ian GALLAGHER poses w/ Holders (L) & Anita Hill on Santa Fe location, the site of the "baked alive" gag. "It's the hardest thing I've ever done, stunt-wise."

"There are some stunts I just won't do," she insists. "I don't care a lot for heights, so I usually avoid high falls. And I never, never do burn stunts."

Nevertheless, it was a relief to be credited with a character—hearts literally, and anonymously, going up in smoke. Holden reminds me that she spent nearly a year on *MORTAL KOMBAT*.

ANNIHILATION, embodying a character that was previously rendered into a digital image. "It's not a huge part, but it was a lead. There were too many characters, and that was the problem. By adapting the *Mortal Kombat* video game to a live-action movie, they tried to satisfy all the game's fans by having everybody's favorite good and bad guys there. But they ended up disappointing the fans because none of pivotal characters is on-screen long enough."

A few years ago, Holden espoused her personal philosophy: "You have to know your limitations, whether physical or personal." And she's still surviving in Hollywood. It's helping that she's grounded in reality: "This is a business that can eat you up. I decided, long ago, that I didn't want to be one of those neurotic actors who gets chewed up and spit out, or turns to drugs or drinking. I keep myself very focused on a spiritual level."

Costume designer Robin Bush succinctly describes Holden's ethos. "Marjean has a spirit and strength that just shines through. She doesn't have to do anything overt to be sexy or powerful. It's just who she is...and she's very comfortable with who she is."



Sheryl Lee on VAMPIRES

A CORPSE ON "TWIN PEAKS" AND ALMOST ALIVE IN CARPENTER'S FILM: HER LIFE SUPPORT IS THE INDIE INDUSTRY.

By JOHN THONEN

She played dead. Making her far-from-auspicious TV debut, a plastic-wrapped Sheryl Lee was cast as Laura Palmer's corpse in the *TWIN PEAKS* pilot (proving herself adept at delivering dialogue, Lee reprised the role in a movie prequel, *TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME* though she was saddled with lines like "I am the muffin." Sometimes dead is better). But the real enigma behind *TWIN PEAKS* is not "Who killed Laura Palmer?" but "Whatever happened to the once-burgeoning careers of the series' female ensemble?" Torrid in the early '90s—and photographed for a profusion of magazine covers—the burgeoning careers of Lee, Sherilyn Fenn, Madchen Amick and Lara Flynn Boyle have slipped into direct-to-video commerce. (In retrospect, the show's male players aren't exactly setting boxoffices on fire: Kyle MacLachlan, who earned a Golden Globe for his role as "Dale Cooper," hardly registered a blip on the big screen in *SHOWGIRLS* or *THE FLINTSTONES*).

Then again, Boyle prefers more esoteric films that ap-



Lee as a literal "lady of the night" in *VAMPiRES*: "What's interesting for me is that my character is human and a vampire. Darkness and light. I was fascinated to explore that."

peal to the "art house" psyche, films like *THE BLOOD ORANGES* which is something about naked peasant women and nothing about fruit. So why did Lee opt for a decidedly more mainstream film like *JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES*? "I've always had a fascination with vampires," she shrugs. "It's not that I'm exactly fascinated with the

dark side... it's the human struggle with it—and how we deal with the two aspects of who we are. We all have those elements. It's almost as if we each have a vampire inside us."

"Controlling that beast, that dark side, is what fascinates me. What was interesting is that my character, Katrina, is half-way in two completely different worlds,

She is human and vampire. Darkness and light. I was fascinated to explore that."

Lee, in fact, was so compulsively drawn to Katrina that she literally dreamt from the vampire femme's point-of-view. "I always think of it as a green light when that happens," she explains. "It's a sign that, subconsciously, I am opening up to the character. One night, I awoke in one of those half-asleep/half-awake states, and I ran my tongue over my teeth and I had fangs. Of course, in the morning they weren't there."

Little wonder, for an actress, Katrina's schizophrenia dilemma is a tough habit to break. Downright juicy. She—a prostitute and fledgling vampire—falls in love with Montoya (Daniel Baldwin), the mortal hero's right hand man. Director John Carpenter described the film as, "A love triangle with all of these main characters battling over a woman who is turning into a vampire. It's a story with a lot of tension." Montoya and Katrina do eventually bond—and some. Since she's incrementally shifting into the vampire mode, the



Lee's bloodthirsty siren ("Siren") played by Thora Birch finally hits the ceiling. Dropping the "I wanna bite your neck" routine, Lee's character is introduced to vampirism when her own inner thigh is turned into a fleshy hors d'oeuvre.

scantily-clad hooker in bed-up for most of the film's running time. One scene, with a naked Lee trussed to a hotel bed, is conspicuous in the film's European trailers.

Addressing the sensational nature of Katrina's affliction, Carpenter reformed a cliché for her initiation into a vampire tribe. Valek, the bloodthirsty leader of the pack, scoffs the tradition of sucking her jugular—rather, he takes a bite of her inner thigh. "Those erotic scenes are actually very funny because they are always very technical," Lee says. "The camera was hanging above me—you have to scoot under it! The bite has to be at just the right spot, not an inch this way or that. You have to figure out which way, and how much you can move your head, before you go out of frame. It's so specific. It always amazes me that these scenes work because they are so far removed from what you are trying to convey."

Lee turned Carpenter's

edit—"If there is no sex, it's not a vampire movie"—into a palpable presence. The actress is no stranger to nudity, though her unveilings are reserved for non-exploitation films and a RED SHOE DIARIES vignette ("Jake's Story"). Nevertheless, she "hates" scenes that predispose her to peel on camera. "It's very uncomfortable to be in bed naked with a person you barely know within a room that's full of strangers!" But the actress, who trained at the

American Academy of Dramatic Art and Denver's National Conservatory Theatre, will not reject a substantive role even if disrobing is obligatory. Sample her casting in BACKSEAT, which chronicled the genesis of The Beatles. "It was a great role for me. Very rewarding and fulfilling. I couldn't pass up the chance just because there were a couple of nude scenes."

But, as one of the luminaries of the independent industry, Lee is quite con-

cerned. She starred in HOMEAGE ('96), which didn't compete with Jerry Bruckheimer's latest noisemaker. It opened quietly at the Sundance Film Festival. During that same year, Lee won a Woman of the Year award from Women in Film.

She hasn't been billed in an Al Pacino film, but—as *Selma*—she performed with the actor at The Circle in the Squares. To Lee, it's all about acting. Not fame. "It's such a crap shoot to try and guess what's going to be a hit or not," she says. "I've no control over that, so it falls back to me being happy with the character I'm playing. Ultimately, it's me who has to get up every day and be that person, that character, and then live with it being on film forever. It has to be about that character because that's all I have control of."

My final inquiry regarded the necrolological nature of her two most popular roles, a stiff in TWIN PEAKS and a "living dead" siren in VAMPIRES. She laughs. "I think a good director is very intuitive. They see things that even the actor may not know is there. They also have to look for a willingness to explore that hidden facet. I have to take risks. To explore something that scares me. Not in my real life, of course, but that's one of the wonderful things about being a performer. I can take the opportunity to explore those aspects of myself without the risks it would have in the real world."

Lee's vampiress lover Monica (Dorothy Hamill) in a hotel bedroom before the big kiss. A clip of their siren "biting" relationship is visible in various telltales.





"I was still modeling when I posed for this picture," says Brooke Shields, model/actress. "It was a tall shoot for a calendar. It was cold, I had goosebumps all over. We only wore one-off shorts. The photographer was completely bundled up."

VAMPIRES

Anita Hart

SHE'S A VAMPIRE TODAY & CINDY CRAWFORD TOMORROW:
SURVIVING TRAGEDY, HART DOUBLED-UP TO THE A-LIST.

BY LAURA SCHIFF

El Niño is in full force one crummy day in February, pissing on Los Angeles with all the fury he can muster. It figures this is the day I am to meet Hollywood stunt woman Anita Hart for lunch. The roads are all flooded and I can't find an empty parking space. By the time I arrive at the restaurant, I'm a sopping mess. Hart greets me in the lobby with a big smile, looking perfectly dry and absolutely gorgeous. In fact, she could be Cindy Crawford's doppelganger. Two inches of rain splashes inside my mud-splattered boots as the busness leads us to a table. Over curly chicken salad, Hart—one of *The Beautiful People*—tells me how she used to be homely. I briefly consider changing careers.

"I grew up in Wisconsin and I always knew that, as soon as I turned 18, I was moving to L.A. to be a model and be on TV," Hart says as I dry off my tape recorder with a paper napkin. "I was the ugliest little kid. I was a



Anita Hart: "We on the set of VAMPiRES. The still photographer allowed me the latitude do do funky, goofy things. I loved playing the bad guy & killing bats."

little tomboy. My mom would cut my hair really short. I dressed like a boy, I acted like a boy. I got in fights with boys all the time. I played football. I used to play cops and robbers with the boys—I always wanted to be the bad guy! I started doing gymnastics when I was four so I was really muscular for a girl. It was always a dream of mine to do stunts. So when I was 18, I dropped out of college and moved out here. I was dating Chuck Norris' son and Chuck used to ask if he could train me. But I used to think karate was so gay and I wasn't into it. Now I wish I would have let him train me. I could say, 'Yeah, I do martial arts and I was trained by Chuck Norris!' So I blew it."

Six months after Hart moved to L.A., the underage ingenue and her ex-boyfriend were out drinking at a bar one night. On their way home, Hart nodded off in the passenger seat, her boyfriend fell asleep at the wheel. *CRASH!* Hart's head whipped through the windshield and struck a tree. She



"I started really low budget & got experience. See, women get less work than men. How often do you see girls doing all the action/hero stuff?"

shows me pictures of her injuries, which were photographed at the hospital.

"I had my lower lip torn off and I knocked out all my front teeth," she tells me matter-of-factly as I look at the bloody photos. "I lost my memory. I couldn't retain a thought long enough to speak it, and I couldn't remember who people were. I didn't remember anything about who I was or where I was from. I broke all my ribs and it did something to the nerves in my back—I was paralyzed from the waist up."

I study Hart's face for visible signs of trauma. There's a couple of faint scars on her chin, cleverly concealed with makeup. I probably wouldn't have noticed if she hadn't told me. "I had my lip reattached and I've had 30 surgeries," she continues. "The accident was 11 years ago and I'm still going through surgery. Just this year I had bone grafting done to replace bone that came out with my teeth. I had skin grafting done. I've had oral surgery done—I split my pallet and it came down and landed on my tongue."

Hart recounts her long period of convalescence. She didn't have medical insurance, so she recuperated on her aunt's sofa for three months until she regained the use of her upper body. It was six months before her memory returned. "At the time, I felt really, really sorry for myself," she admits. "I'd played sports all my life—varsity volleyball, varsity softball, basketball. I

"Me with Mike Piazza, who's a catcher for the Dodgers. He was my boyfriend at the time. He wanted to do some modeling with me; I'm lactose. But we had some fun. A few years later I was working with vampires and吸血鬼."

Anita Hart on

VAMPIRES

What's so scary about JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES? Quirky action star Thomas Ian Griffith, stunt woman Cris Palomino or Carpenter, himself, and all concur the big pulse pounder transpired behind-the-scenes. eight actors, cast as the film's Master Vampires, were actually buried alive! But Anita Hart, a self-professed "adrenaline junkie" cast as one of the vamps, was having a ball. "I loved it," she grins. "When they told me about it, I was so excited. How often in my life am I going to get a chance to be buried alive?"

A lifelong athlete, Hart dropped out of college to pursue a modeling career. Her photo assignments included an eight-year tenure posing for Frederick's of Hollywood catalogs. Eventually shifting gears, Hart opted for acting. A role on *BAYWATCH* earned her membership in the Screen Actors Guild, but Hart got pretty sick of typecasting. "I kept getting sent on these bimbo parts," she recalls. "I don't want to be the chick on the beach [pregnant pose]. But if I get to play the chick on the beach who kicks some ass, then—"

Hart admits that she's always been hooked on scary. "I used to jump off cliffs just for the thrill," she laughs. "By becoming a stunt woman, I get paid for what I used to do for free." On occasion, Hart managed to squeeze two gigs out of the same film: performing a minor role in addition to stunt work. She worked her way up to the big leagues, doubling for Brooke Shields, Cindy Crawford, Mimi Rogers and a profusion of other celebrities. "I wasn't school smart and I'm not a

THE BEAUTY TURNS BEASTLY FOR CARPENTER'S CARNAGE.

BY JOHN THOMEN



Top: Here & James Woods kiss from the grousing *film*. "Jim worked about injuring me until I knew I was double-pedaled," says Hart. "He paints my face full of lead. A mechanical illness of my head was made for clean-ups."

gifted actress," she says with unaffected humility. "My gift is the physical stuff. If you put me in a part that's physical, I can do it."

You name it: car hits, air rams, fights. But Hart has cut back on high falls. "I loved them—at the start," she explains. "I like heights but there is always some twist that makes it risky. There are

so many other things you have to concentrate on like here, dodge and knock this guy down, jump up here and throw yourself off scaffolding. And don't forget that we have three cameras on you, so don't look at any of them. You end up with your mind on everything except the stunts, and that's how you get hurt."

She suffered her only serious injury while shooting a swim suit video for Pamela Anderson. "They knew I did stunt work," recounts Hart, "and they wanted me to do this dive out of a helicopter. I'd never even been in a helicopter but I agreed to do it. Shooting it several times, they kept pushing the copier higher."

"The last time, they lied to me about our altitude. As soon as I went out, I knew I was too high." Hart wore no protective pads; furthermore, no safety personnel was assigned to the event. Hart's impact with the water knocked her unconscious. "It's weird going out of a copier because the blades push you down real fast at first. I knew that if it went wrong, I would drown." Hart took the plunge: the collision with





Top: "My vampire character takes a flying leap up an elevator shaft," reveals Hart. "Strapped to a harness & wired with cables, I crash through the elevator floor."



Hart reveals her death scene: "As a vampire, I burst into Thomas when exposed to sunlight. For two hours, they applied fire gel to me, wrapped me in a flammable plastic suit [!] & zapped it off by shooting an arrow into a chest plate [!]. Q: 'I'm buried for a scene where I rise from the grave. The tag says no crew won't stop on me after I'm buried. Didn't work, I got stepped on, anyway.'"/>

the water broke her ribs. She managed to stay conscious and wake before.

Prior to working on Carpenter's film, Hart had already developed her vampiric internship by playing blood suckers in *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN* and *BLADE* (the latter film, in fact, was shooting concurrently with *VAMPIRES*). But her ap-



prenticeship, as a vamp, afforded Hart little to do. "Guys get to work all the time, they get all the good stuff," she laments.

VAMPIRES stunt coordinator Jeff Imada remembered Hart from *DAWN*. "It was great," she grins. "I had a lot to do in Carpenter's movie and I like that." Hart was literally smoking in the finale of a major fight sequence. The topbilled James

Woods is a modern Professor Abraham, organizing a posse of professional vampire hunters. Hart's character is one of seven Master Vampires who answer to Valek, the progenitor of all earthly blood parasites. "We're really hard to kill," says Hart. "I take a crossbow bolt in the stomach, which was where I did the backwards air ram I fly back, land on my back and then I'm up again—and I'm really mad." Woods and his coterie attach a wire to the crossbow bolt; on the other end is a jeep-powered winch which pulls the snowbound vampires into the deadly rays of daylight. Hart's hellcat has other ideas.

"I manage to break the cable," she grins. "James Woods shoots me about 18 times and then tries to spear me with this huge pole. He misses and I try to hit him. Right then, they reattach the cable to the winch and it slams me to the floor and starts dragging me—but I've still got a hold of James Woods. So they're dragging me out as we fight. Finally, I'm dragged into the sun and go up in flames."

Hart, wired from head-to-toe for the fire stunt, was disappointed with the results. "Some of the wires weren't hooked up, so not all of me burned—which bummed me out," Carpenter was satisfied, but Hart hoots about the "pokey little flames." She was more satisfied with KNB Effects' mechanical head, sculpted from a cast of her face, which Woods' character pumps full of lead. She managed to stand right beside Carpenter, watching the monitor, as the scene was shot. "When the last squib went off, it looked like there was a big flame shooting out of my nose. After John yelled 'Cut!' I shouted, 'That was great. That fuck was so mad she was breathing fire.' I begged John to leave it in. And when I saw the screening, it was a keeper."

"I was so happy because almost all my stunts were left in. There's really not a lot of good action roles for women, so I loved *VAMPIRES* for that." □

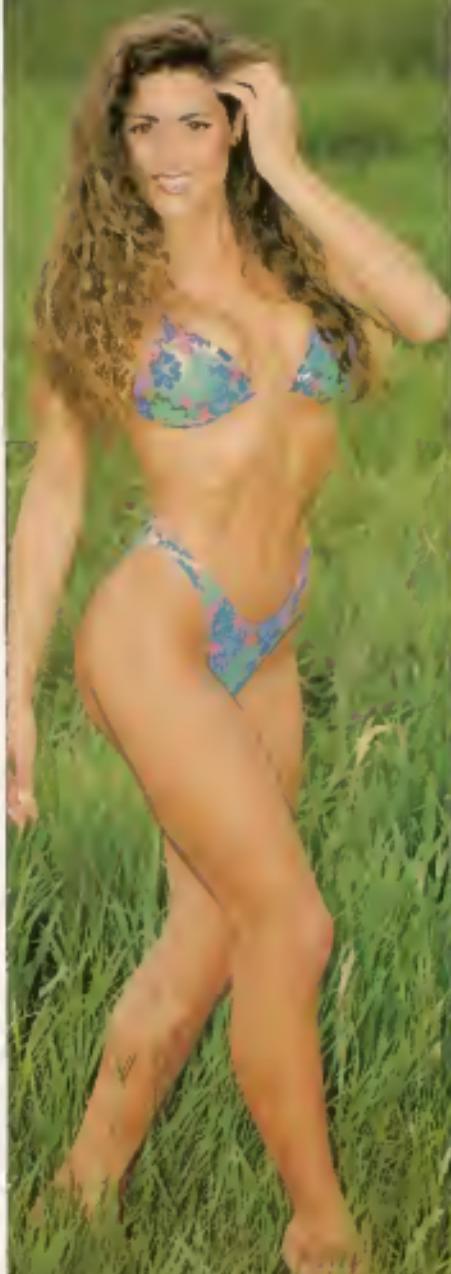


"When I broke into acting, I got stuff like BAYWATCH: bimbo on a beach. It was always a 'nude bimbo.' It wasn't me: you couldn't pay me enough."

did 13 years of gymnastics. I had just started my modeling portfolio one month before the accident, and now I thought my life was shattered. But I was a fighter. They told me I'd never do gymnastics again, and I said, "Yes, I will." Physically, I'm in great shape now."

She bought herself some boobs ("I always wanted them") and landed a few modeling assignments. But the scars on her face proved to be a sticking point. "I figured if I'm going to get in a car accident, I might as well get paid for it!" Hence, Hart shifted into a career as a stunt woman. Through a friend, she met stunt coordinator Cole McKay and cir-

"David Hasselhoff, his body double and me on BAYWATCH HIGHLIGHTS. Deidre gave me my first on-screen kiss!"



"My bikini shoot in Hawaii, during which I posed on the wrong end of atering horse! T. George Clooney & I on a FROM DUSK TILL DAWN set."

cas stunt trainer, Bob Verres in 1994, after two years of training, Hart finally fell into her first stunt job for a movie—literally.

"PM Entertainment needed stunt girl to do a fight scene with Cynthia Rothrock," recalls Hart. "It was for GUARDIAN ANGEL. I was cast in the film as a maid named Maria who was trying to drug Cynthia's tea. Then I got busted. Cynthia kicked me off a balcony and I died. They wanted a girl who was really ethnic looking and, at the time, my hair was really dark and curly. I nailed my high fall off the balcony in one take."

Was Hart just a bit nervous the first time she negotiated a high fall on film? "I laughed all the way down!" she grins. "I couldn't get the scream out because I was having so much fun, and I was so excited! When I'm



T. Hart & his friend, bodybuilder Michael O'Hearn, pose on Zuma Beach. B. Covering up: Powers on the set of *AUSTIN POWERS*. Hart (l) notes, "I had to lose some weight to fit into the b*tchin' one-piece leather outfit. We're talkin' real tight."



doing high falls, I like to just get up there—don't make me stand there, and look down, and wait and get nervous and think about it. I just like to get there and do it. I'm such an adrenaline junkie that I just love it! I get so excited. Even now when I'm working, I'll have a hard time falling asleep at night if I've got something really good to do the next day."

Hart went on to do six more projects for PM Entertainment: *CYBERTRACKER*, *CYBERTRACKER 2*, *HOLOGRAM MAN*, *L.A. HEAT*, *STEEL FRONTIER*, and *SINFUL INTRIGUE*. Says the beautiful daredevil, "I started off really low budget and got tons of expe-

"I'm a vampire in FROM DUSK TILL DAWN. The girls wore skimpy outfits and couldn't wear shin pads—they threw body parts at us!! My stunts were cut!"

skin-tone, full-body, Nomex fire retardant suit, head to toe—hands, fingers, everything—then cut the sleeves off. They put fire gel on my arms, face, ears, anywhere my skin was exposed. Then I had a harness on underneath. I was pegged in the front, and I had a cable running over my left shoulder that was attached to a crane 180 feet high all the way across the waterway. And then they had that attached to a system called a ratchet. When they "ratchet" you, you're pretty much going for a ride. It's hundreds of pounds of pressure and, when they hit the button, it yanks you so hard. We did one rehearsal before we filmed. It was a big shot—nine cameras!—and once you blow up the building, you can't go back and do it again, so it was a one-take deal.

rence, which was great because women get so much less work than men. How often do you see girls doing all the action hero stuff?"

Her experience landed Hart on the A-list: she was eventually hired for *FAIR GAME*, as the double for supermodel Cindy Crawford. In one of the most amazing stunts I've ever seen, Hart executes a perfect back layout with a half twist. Not so bard, yes? Try doing it off a 45-foot pier and landing in a waterway as a building explodes right in front of you. I rewound and watched that sequence three or four times on my VCR.

"It was so exciting!" Hart gushes. "They made me a



7 Hart, in vampire makeup sans contacts, poses with a KISS effigy during *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN* press junket. **8** Among the film's vampire strippers, Hart (middle row) recounts, "One of my more scenes, still in the editing room, is where I'm trussed and my chest bleeds green gore. I like that kind of stuff."





AUSTIN POWERS: Top, l. Hart with Mike Myers ("Hilarious, but, off-camera, he's quiet"). Top, r. w/ stunt coordinator Steve Davis & Elizabeth Hurley. Left: W/ "Pamela" Cindy Margolis ("She's now the #1 pickup. Cindy is hot—very hot").



"After I came out of hair and makeup, I was all ready to go. I walked out and saw all these fire trucks lined up and they were watering down the whole building. There were over 3,000 people lined up on the streets to watch. Every news channel was there, along with newspaper reporters and photographers. All I could think was, 'If I fuck up, I'm going to fuck up in front of everybody.' It was on the local

news, it was on *ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT*, on the front cover of three newspapers—we flying through the air! I wasn't nervous about the stunt at all. I was just so excited to do it, a cousin's walk. But when I saw all these people watching me, that made me really nervous. I made them take me back inside—I didn't even want to look."

Crawford plays an attorney who's supposed to be

FROM DARK TILL DAWN: Below, l. Hart ("My last day on the set") w/ stunt coordinator Steve Davis & director Robert Rodriguez. Below r.: Rigged for a flying scene, "Another missing scene: I had to over the bar [it], drop on a guy & bite him."



"People are always a little shy with me at first. But, once they get to know me, they realize I can hit the dirt as hard as anybody else."

deep-sixed by Russian terrorists. Standing on the third-story balcony of her waterfront home, Crawford turns on a TV with a remote control that detonates a bomb device. BOOM! The directors called "Cut!" Crawford returned to the cushy interior of her Honeywagon and Hart stepped in for the big shebang.

"I just concentrated on my cue," says the steely-nerved stunt woman. "They had to pull me at a downward angle so the fire would go over my head and not burn me. There was a 100-foot fireball and shattered glass everywhere. It was amazing. I just flew. The ratchet yanked me so hard, the first thing I saw was my feet. I never even saw the flames. I flipped over backwards, I saw my feet, I spotted the water and then I realized I was caught in the cable. My arm had gotten wrapped in it somehow as I flipped. It all happened so fast. They say I hit the water in 2.4 seconds. So that's why I was twisting on the way down—I was trying to get out of the cable while still selling the shot. When I got out of the water, I didn't feel anything because my adrenaline was so high. I could have gotten my arm cut off and not felt it. The next day, my arm was so sore. I had torn muscles and a bruise from my elbow to my armpit. It was the ugliest thing I've ever seen, but it was so worth it. It was so much fun. When they were counting down the cameras, I kept telling myself, 'Whatever you do, remember this



Tiffani Hart in "BAYWATCH NIGHTS" director Richard Friedman. A super-nice guy. I played a Virtual Reality archer. "It's a death market" as an L.A. HEAT broker.

moment because you'll never live this again.' It was the best feeling I've ever had in my life. That was my greatest moment."

"How does being a stunt person, who's face is never seen, impact your ego?" I query. "Does it ever bother you that you're doing all the work, and someone else gets all the glory?"

"I like it," she says, "because I've never been one who liked being center stage. It takes the pressure off of me, you know? I feel like they have the harder part, and then I get to step in and do all the fun stuff. No one knows who I am, and I like it that way. My job is to make the stunt coordinator happy. What's really important to me is making the girl, whom I'm doubling for, look good. If she's happy with me and what

I've done, that's the best thing. That's what I strive for. I consider myself an athlete, not an actress. When I was breaking into acting, I got stuff like *BAYWATCH*—himbo on the beach in a bathing suit. And they were always asking me, 'Do you do nappy?' And they wanted me topless. It was always like some nappy, himbo girl—sleazy stuff. It just wasn't me. You couldn't pay me enough money."

These days, Hart is paid plenty of greenbacks for her stunt work. After doubling for Cindy Crawford in *FAIR GAME* and a couple of *Papa* commercials, Hart was firmly established in the major leagues. In 1998, she worked with producer Quentin Tarantino and writer/director Robert Rodriguez in *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN*. "I played a vampire," she

says. "But all the stunts that I did—everything—got cut. The First AD called me and said that there's a behind-the-scenes segment included on the laser disc and I'm supposedly in that, but I haven't seen it. It's disappointing when you work and it doesn't make it into the final cut. And I got injured doing that, too. The girls are wearing these skimpy outfits, so you can't pad up and I couldn't put skin pads on. I got a bad cut on my skin and it seemed like every time we'd fight, it would hit



a table or something and I had this big bruise on it. Then I got hit by a flying head. There were people standing on the sidelines throwing haybales—arms and legs and heads—while we're fighting. It was so funny because the flying head had all this blood on it, and it went all over my leg. When I saw this blood running down my leg, I thought my leg was cut open but it was the fake blood from the flying head. I was so relieved!"

Another highlight from Hart's résumé is a gig in last year's *VOLCANO*: "I played a nurse. The fire gal I was wearing dried up. I burst off my eyelashes, my eyebrows and the front of my hair." Just another day at the office.

Sometimes the job description of a stunt woman



BEACH ABOVE & BEYOND L: Hart and Kristin Davis (right) as aliens ("I couldn't see through the sandy contacts—*and* pants!"). R: Doubling for series star Kristin Davis ("Kristen always gave me wonderful feedback, so I thanked my ass for her").



includes a lot of hurry up and wait. Case in point, **AUSTIN POWERS: INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY** Hart doubled for two actresses, Mimi Rogers and Elizabeth Hurley. "There really wasn't a lot of stunts. A lot of times they'll bring in a stunt double, and they may not use you; but they need you there for safety reasons, so that the actress doesn't get hurt. So I never even got to go in for Mimi. Elizabeth and I did do one fight scene together, but it never made it into the final cut. The little leather outfits we wore were so tight, we couldn't even lift our legs up to kick. I mean, they were tight. It took two people to get you in it. They wanted it skin tight. Elizabeth said she lost weight just so she could move in it."

Hired for **THE FLOOD**, later titled **HARD RAIN**, Hart doubled for Minnie Driver. The Oscar nominee played an imperiled artist whose small town is sub-

merged in a deluge. The central plot involved a security guard (Christian Slater) whose armored truck is hijacked by a gang of thieves.

"It took seven million gallons of water to fill that sound stage," recounts Hart about the soggy production. "They kept the water pretty warm, but when you're in it all day—," Hart shivers as El Nino rages on outside the restaurant. "And the rain was really cold," she continues. "As soon as they turned on the rain, you'd just freeze. There weren't a lot of stunts. I worked on that show for a long time, and



metty I just remember being in the water a lot. I was actually really sick by the time we finished. I had bronchitis from getting in and out of the water, and being cold and wet all day. I got really ill."

A couple of critical scenes were catalytic for Hart to wade-in for Driver. The first was a cliffhanger where the actress, trapped in a house engulfed in a rising tide of water, is handcuffed to a banister. A tree crashes through the wall, nearly splintering our heroine. The second scene involved Driver and Slater, perched on

the roof of a waterlogged house, who nearly collide in a speedboat that's picked up altitude and charging into the couple. "Doubling for Driver, I jumped over the side of the roof and I hung on," says Hart. "Boy, I was just gritting on as hard as I could, breaking all my nails. But women don't get a lot of stunts. I wish Minnie had a lot of action, but she really didn't."

"After we finished that scene, I was dying to take a big ole' leap off that roof and hit the water. I was so bored because I wasn't getting to do any stunts. And so I just did it. I knew I probably shouldn't have done it, but I had to jump off that roof at least once. And Christian was behind me watching. He's a super nice guy and he was joking around a little bit and he was like, 'I'm not going to be shown up by her.' So he hopped off the roof and into the water, shouting, 'You crazy stunt girl! It wasn't a macho thing with him—we were just fooling around. But they looked at my stunt coordinator and he came over to me. They were upset with me because Christian could have gotten hurt.'

"Do you ever experience prejudice on the set because you're a woman?" I ask.

"People are always a little shy with me at first, because they don't think they can

"Me and a guest player on the short-lived SPY GAME series. Jeff Inside (WILL FERRELL) was the stunt coordinator. I play a kickboxer nun, with flip-every-hair."



"John Carpenter directed us: 'Pretend that you're each other's ex-spouses.' So James Woods stabs me in the chest and yells, 'Die, bitch!'"

throw me around or whatever," replies Hart. "But once they get to know me, they realize I can hit the ground as hard as anybody else."

Hart's latest project, *VAMPIRES*, is scheduled for imminent release. Directed by horror veteran John Carpenter (*THE THING*, *HALLOWEEN*, etc.), the modern Grand Guignol saga stars James Woods and Daniel Baldwin. Hart, cast as a literal vamp identified as Female Master #2, was introduced to Woods several years ago when she doubted for actress Bobbie Phillips (who recently starred in Wes Craven's *CARNIVAL OF SOULS* remake). "Bobbie and I are friends," explains Hart, "and we went to a formal dinner at the Bel Air Country Club. We were

R. "Less sweat, more shiny." R. "Me & Johnny Martin in *STARSHIP TROOPERS*. (R. 60, adult: 110 degrees, 9-hour workouts, towels, abductions courses.)"





AUSTIN POWERS: Top, L. Hart (dressing) rehearses the "Penisbot fatales" ("The doctor, Jay Roach, allowed me the freedom to improvise"). Top, r. w/ Mike Myers ("I doubled for Elizabeth Hurley—an absolute sweetheart—and then Rogers"). Bottom, Five gel is applied to Hart's hair in the next scene, her wig will burst into flame.



in these long formal dresses. After dinner, we were walking along the golf course and everyone was standing around talking and Bobbie was like, 'Anita's my stunt double! She can do flips! Show 'em, Anita!' I was in high heels and a stretchy Betsey Johnson dress and I'd had a few drinks—"I really don't think I'm going to do any flips tonight, Bobbie. Sorry!" James Woods was there and he said to take off my heels. So I took off my shoes and went darting across the golf course, doing all those flips in my long dress. Afterwards, James Woods was like, 'Yeah, I'll never forget you!'

And he didn't. Woods was elated to be reunited with Hart on the set of *VAMPIRES*—though you'd never know it from watching the film. "James Woods killed me in the movie," says Hart. "It was so violent that it offended a lot of the women on the set. They thought he was actually

hurting me but it was a lot of fun. John Carpenter directed us: 'Okay, you two, pretend you're each other's ex-spouses!' And it got really violent. James Woods said, 'I know who you're going to be!' and he stabbed me in the chest, saying, 'Die, bitch!' He shot me in the face five times. They made special molds of my head that were kind of edited into the film somehow. When I get injured, it's usually by the actor or actress—not another stunt person. Sure enough, I got a black eye from one actress and I got punched in the nose by another actress who missed.

Hart doubling for a guest actress on *WEIRD SCIENCE*. "Sometimes I do look like, oh this where I did pretzels. The cast was fun. But I like playing and girls."



One of the actors gave me a bloody lip because he hit me with a gun he forgot to drop. I got hurt when people screw up. Knowing that, I thought, 'Gosh, if James misses, he could stab me right in the neck or right in the boob or something.' So I double padded my whole front area and I put a hard pad over my chest so that he couldn't possibly hurt me. The next day, my chest was so sore because—even though it was padded—it was just really, really violent. My whole jaw swelled up on one side because he accidentally hit me in the jaw with the gun."

A couple of months ago, Hart was set to double for Julie Strain (32 & 56), who had been cast as THE BLACK SCORPION, a Roger Corman series for Showtime (the title character was previously incarnated by Joan Severance in Corman's made-for-cable films); but Showtime beefed that Strain's presence in "hiking/ballistics" movies produced by Andy Sidaris—a stable of the network—already afforded her maximum visibility. Strain, compensated with options for another Corman series, walked Michelle Lantel substituted as the superheroine. "I actually worked on the first BLACK SCORPION movie [in 1996] and I did a big fight with Joan Severance," recalls Hart. "It was fun. I walked away with so many huge bruises from hitting the ground and falling all over the place. And then I saw how they pieced the fight scene together, and I was totally disappointed. It looked terrible. Terrible. A lot of fight scenes have to do with camera angles. From the wrong camera angle, a hit can look like a miss. She was really kicking me, and I pedaled up for it, but I couldn't kick her. So when I saw it, it lookedousy. I was embarrassed."

Still, Hart was very excited about doubling for Strain, whom she's known

"There was a 100-foot fireball and shattered glass everywhere. I flipped backwards, spotted the water & realized I was caught in the cable..."

for eight years. "Julie was roommates with a friend of mine when she first walked into town," says Hart. "Julie's 6'1" and I'm only 5'8. For stunts, it's better to be shorter, but everybody always thinks I'm taller than I am because I always wear heels and because I have long legs. I wear lifts in my shoes when I double tall girls. Unless they have me standing next to someone else, while I'm crashing through a window or whatever, no one's going to know how tall I am."

No matter her physical stature, one thing is clear: Anita Hart is someone that people can look up to, and she doesn't need lifts in her shoes to walk tall. □

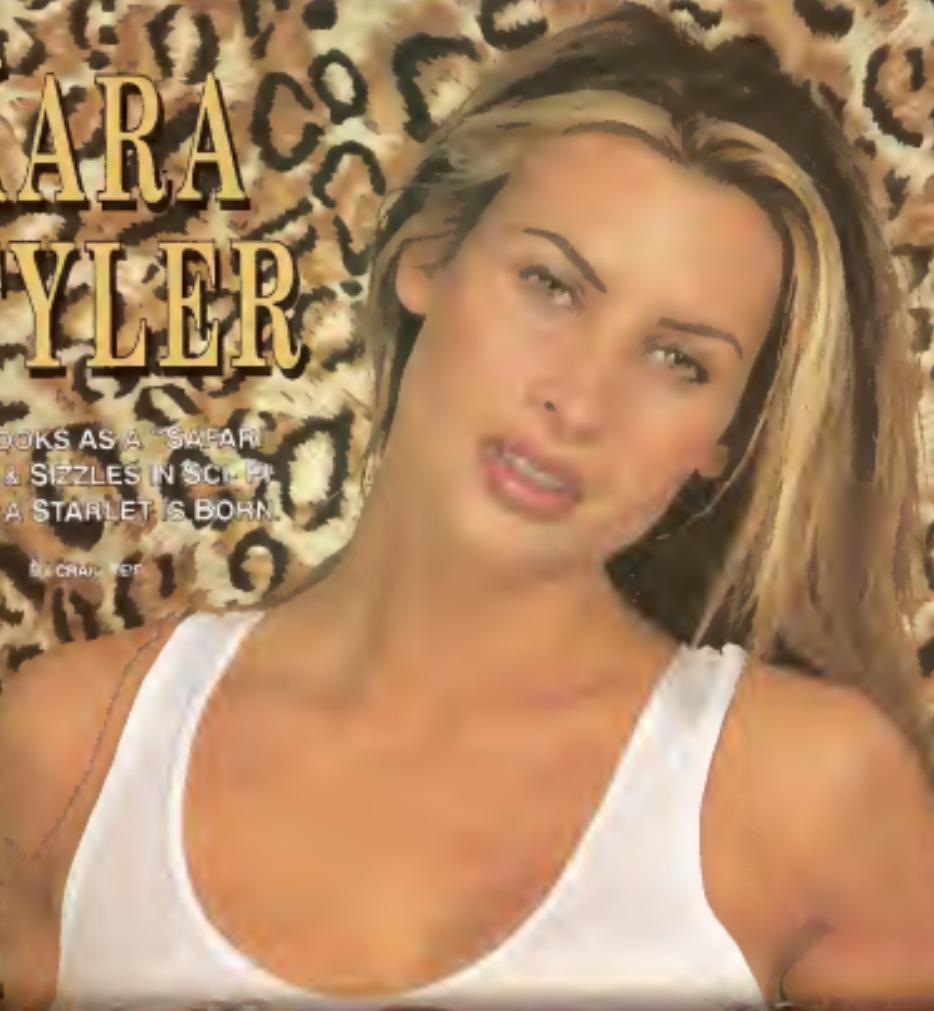
At Hart (far from right), hangs out with another empire babe in MADH. "I used stage blood, stored in tanks and exposed to the sun, and it exploded as a result, actors suffered skin rashes. But this is ascribed to rumors. It happened before I got on the set."



KARA STYLER

SHE COOKS AS A "SAFARI
SIREN" & SIZZLES IN SCI-FI
FLICKS. A STARLET IS BORN.

BY CRAIG KELLY





As one of the *Safari* sirens, everyone
Kara Taylor is around
as a constant source to
newspapers. "Kara is
extremely photogenic—
it is a statement,
Heddie goddess-type
of woman," says photo-
grapher D. J. Patric.
"She's very comfortable
with her body."



It's one of the most anti-quoted plots in the history of movies. And it's the stuff that fuels Fox's Swoop Week shockumentaries: Emmy Lou—a rosy-cheeked, naive, thieving, fresh-off-the-farm virgin—arrives in Hollywood to pursue a showbiz career.

—One month later—

*Cut to the interior of a striptease dive. Taking a drag off a Camel cigarette, Emmy Lou crunches the butt in a beer bottle cap. Exhal-
ing a puff of smoke, she ods
her way across the runway
and gyrates to a pop tune
wailing out of a jakebox.
Emmy Lou unfastens her
sequin-faced bra and tosses it
into the sweaty palms of the
hard drinkin' patrons, all of
whom look like extras from
*SMOKEY AND THE BAN-
DIT*. Twirling the tassels
that conceal her nipples,
she—*

Kari Styler embodies this "corrupted innocent" chestnut. And she seems to relish every second of it..

Born and raised in, yes, the Midwest, Styler's life—yielding to political correction—is a bad B-movie. She's the smalltown blonde whose bewildering anatomic assets, evoked by a tank top

L. "I think that I am really a sexual creature." P. Titled as Christy Styler in her debut film ("I used that name because of the reviews I was doing").



and a peek at her midriff, drew wolf whistles even on Sundays. Expecting the same sort of adulation from producers, Styler moved to Hollywood. She wanted to be a movie star.

I was introduced to Styler—whose first name pendulously swung from Kara to Chrissy—on the set of *VIRTUAL ENCOUNTERS II*. A Surrender Cinema production, the film was another of the company's low-budget "sexy science fiction films" (translation: softcore sex). The "sci-fi" is cast adrift in cornball props—laser guns, VH gaggle, etc.—and bosomy extraterrestrials. Though insisting she wasn't nervous, Styler appeared quite distracted; her body language and quivering voice resonated with anxiety.

The next time I met Styler, she was recuperating from a snowboard accident. Watching cartoons on her TV set, the starlet was stroking Peanut, her pet chihuahua. I greeted the pup with, "Yo quiere Taco Bell." It snapped at me.

Styler broke into a grin. "He loves cartoons and listening to TV show tunes from the '70s and '80s. And he's cuter than the dog in the Taco Bell commercial. I just did this [Playboy] Book of Lingerie photo shoot and Peanut posed with me. He will be famous now."

Born and raised in Indiana, Styler demythologizes her "associates lost" facade. She didn't arrive in the big, bad city as a homely wench with a Bible; she packed a pair of pants. "I was a stripper before doing these movies because, in high school, I was very awkward. I never felt graceful or attractive and never had a boyfriend. Then, at 18, I don't know what happened to me—I just blossomed into this sexual creature. The first time I went into this strip club, I saw a really tall, beautiful blonde named Natalie and I will never forget that. I said, 'I wish I could be that graceful.' So I tried it and I was! I did get to meet Natalie, and

KARA STYLER

"I'm not afraid of being typecast. I like doing B-movies because they're fun and I make money from it! It'd be cool to do a film where I'm topless and chased in a graveyard by a monster."



Styler on double standards: "It's ridiculous. Guys can have a one-night stand, so why not women? And men can separate sex & love, so why can't women?"

she gave me a little help.

"You know, during high school in Indiana, all you think about is getting out. There is not really much to do. As a child, my friends and I kept saying how we were all going to run away and come to California. I was the only one who got up and did it. [Pleas!] I can be a very trusting person until

someone does me wrong. I'm a good judge of character and reading people."

But probing Hollywood for truth is like trying to spot a Studio City ingenue who didn't apply for silicone surgery. Then again, how could Styler be so porous when she appeared to be operating on a schizophrenic tract? I mean, was I ad-

dressing Chrissy Styler or Kara Styler? "I killed myself as Chrissy Styler because of the movies I was doing like *EROTIC HOTEL* and *VIRTUAL ENCOUNTERS II*," she replied. "I wasn't sure where I was going with that. So now Kara Styler is my official name—not legally, but I am planning to make it my legal name. Why? I just like it."

Don't ask, but our conversation somehow shifted into astrology. "I'm Aries," Styler beamed. "Aries rule! I just got this little tattoo on my ankle, it's the Aries' horns with a little 'A'. I am a double Aries. If you read the Aries book, it fits me. I'm also into Chinese astrology."

And so am I! "Kara, according to the Chinese zodiac, I was born in the year of the monkey. And you were born on..."

"March 29th!"

"The Chinese year of the rat," I observed. "The perception is that rats are ambitious, spend money, can't make friends. And, astrologically speaking, there are certain men you shouldn't marry."

"I have already been married to someone and am now divorced," Styler shrugged. "My challenges are rabbits, horses, goats and roosters. I get along with dragons, rats, oxen, snakes and monkeys. I really want to check out India, the whole Hindu life thing. My parents are Buddhists, but I like the Hindu thing. And, yes, I believe in reincarnation—I have been around."

So how did she make the transition from stripper to one of Surrender Cinema's ensemble of sirens? "Well, I made the jump because, at that time, I was going through a divorce—and I kind of did it, like, out of revenge. And I thought that I wanted to get into porno, but then decided that I really did not want to have sex with anyone. But I like the kissing and touching stuff, and I think that I am really a sexual creature. So I don't think I will do porno...right now."



Her hesitation prompted me to query, "How about in the future?"

A few heartbeats later, she sighed, "Hard to tell."

Styler looked a bit fatigued but hardly vulnerable. It was my cue to drop the bomb...

"Kara, aren't you sending the message—with the stripping and softcore sex—that the only way to deal

with the Hollywood meat market is to put yourself on the menu?"

Before I could unravel my own mixed metaphor, Styler shot back with, "NO! My mom would always tell me that I am a very intelligent woman, and that I should use my mind to make money. I told her, 'Mom, I am using my mind by using my body.' You know, every day I

work out, I run and take care of myself. I had [breast enhancement] surgery at 18. This is my job, taking care of my body. It's my investment. And with this investment I would like to get paid. My family knows what I do and my mom is happy for me and isn't a judgmental woman. And I enjoy acting."

Kara, when you show up

for an audition, I doubt that the casting director asks whether you prefer Method acting to Stanislavsky. I mean, isn't the whole purpose of the audition to see if you look good when you're naked?"

"Yes!" Styler says jubilantly, "—and that is what I like! I am okay with that. If you have a hang-up with that, doing these films



Styler is making over an offer to "model as a multimillion-dollar star"—with leopard print behind." Her primary goal: R-Green. "I like Julie Strain's stuff, but I want to be me. I do my own stuff."



KARA STYLER

"I was a stripper before doing these movies because, in high school, I was very awkward and never felt attractive and never had a boyfriend. At 18, I blossomed into this sexual creature..."

men? That is what I am doing." If she has an Achilles heel, it's an admission that she's reluctant to view her own work: "I did some billboard for a clothing company on Sunset Boulevard and La Cienega. I can't even drive by and look at them."

Professing a fondness for sci-fi flicks, Styler is equally enamored with yesterday's glam movies and wishes she could transport back to the epoch when women accessorized their hats, gloves and purses to match their fur stoles. But she'd prefer to move into the next millennium as The Queen of B-Movies: "I no longer want to be a big movie star because I don't want to give up my privacy. I just like doing B-films because I think they are fun, and I can make money out of it. I just want to have fun in my life. I would love to do a film where I just jump out of a grave and a monster chases me through a cemetery while I am topless. That is funny and cool. Or to do a wicked fight scene where I wear something really low-cut, and then I bend over and distract my attacker and kick them on the back of their neck—or flash my tits and kick them. I want to be a sexpot, kick ass and then lure them back to my hotel room. I like Julie Strain's stuff, but I want to be me and do my own stuff out there."

Styler may prefer to be territorial because her past stuff is directionless, generic T&A that she's either repressed or just didn't give a damn about. She addresses my questions, regarding her films, with Clinton-esque sound bites.

"Kara, you've wrapped a

trilogy of sex/science fiction hybrids. How would you define the characters that you played?"

"I have no idea."

"What did you do in VIRTUAL ENCOUNTERS II?"

"I have no idea."

"What did your wardrobe—if you had one—consist of?"

"I don't know!"

"The names of your film characters?"

"I can't tell you. I have no idea. I can't remember."

"So FEMALIEN II is your most recent film, right?"

"If you say so."

She wasn't trying to be a wiseass; it's just that her past roles are nondescript. Styler routinely auditions for "the vixen" who says and wears next-to-nothing. If she wants to dethrone Julie Strain as Queen-B, Styler needs a director who—heavily endear his "Pop your top" drill—can afford her an en-

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Styler Readily heats-up as one of the *Queen B's*, a comic book spoof of *Queen Bee*. Call 800-888-3888 for info.



UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

CHANDRA WEST

CAST IN PARTS II AND III OF THE SCI-FI SHOOT-'EM-UP,
SHE TALKS ABOUT ACTION EPICS, STEREOTYPES & SEQUELS.

BY PAUL WARDLE

It's the final shooting day of *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER*, parts 2 and 3. Showtime had scheduled Part II, a sequel to Jean-Claude Van Damme's (1992) shoot-'em-up, for broadcast in Sept./Oct. '98. Director Jeff Woolnough was organizing a few retakes with Chandra West, the female lead, for the fade-out scene. Dressed in army fatigues, she slides her card through a slot in the electronic door, looks around and slips inside. Between takes, it's pretty obvious that West is irritated by her enlisted men's cap: she flips it off while Woolnough sets up the next scene. (Later, in her trailer, she confirmed her military chapeau was quite itchy.)

When the final shot is wrapped the crew applauds her walking off the set. West gets a big hug from cast and crew who, united for 42 days of shooting, have become family. Completion of a movie routinely prompts the obligatory embraces and camaraderie, but you get the feeling these people really mean it.

Kelly Shainfield, one of several assistant directors on the lot, rhapsodized both West and co-star Matt Battaglia. "The crew really loved them. They're very easy-going." Drawing from her long experience with actors, Shainfield quickly pointed out this sort of amiability doesn't prevail on every set.

Chandra West was raised in the Canadian city of Vancouver, British Columbia and the town of Oakville, Ontario. Studying ballet for ten years, she won a modeling contest sponsored by *Seventeen* magazine. After a brief stint as a model, she did some TV commercial work and later enrolled in a three-year acting program at Concordia University in Montreal Quebec. During a summer break, she landed the lead in *TRUE CONFETIONS*, a feature film, with her first audition.

Additional movie and TV roles followed, the latter including episodic parts in *FOREVER KNIGHT*, *KIN-DRED: THE EMBRACED*, *HIGHLANDER* and *ROAD TO AVONLEA* among many others.

Accompanied by Battaglia, the strikingly beautiful West delivered Christmas gifts to the crew before sitting down for our interview. Clad in khaki trousers and black turtleneck sweater, she lit a cigarette and conceded that the *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER* series is a departure from her comparatively more subdued roles. "Truthfully, I've never had a huge desire to do an action thing," she admitted, but was wooed into the project as a result of the script. "I was saying to Jeff [Woolnough] and Kevin [Gillis, producer], when this first came up, I [was] apprehensive. But I really think that these sequels are so much better than the original. At first, I had a really bad attitude about it. I'm not a big fan of

CHANDRA WEST

"My character is well rounded and well written. I'm definitely not 'the screaming girl in high heels.'"

draw on that."

She also reveals that certain lines of dialogue were ad-libbed in rehearsal. Battaglia encouraged West to improvise in certain scenes: "Jeff [Woolnough] is wonderful. He's so open. He's really created an environment that's conducive to good work and to improving the project to make it more interesting. It's been a really fun show."

Of course, the shoot wasn't all fun and games. Accustoming herself to the athletic rigors of the role, West pushed her body to the limit. "No matter how you look at it, it's still an action movie," she explains. "That has been difficult because I've never done that before. I was worried that, because Matt and I are the two leads, that they would want [Veronica] to look super-cool when she's doing all the action stuff. And she shouldn't because she's a reporter. She's a totally normal woman."

One by one, her worries about the shoot were alleviated: "What I like about it is that it's realistic. I haven't had to do anything where people are going to sit there and say, 'Oh come on! There's no way!' She's reacting to each situation [in her own way]. It's interesting to see that fish-out-of-water thing."

Though it's not Shakespeare, the film offered West some training that's not accessible on the stage. "It's hard when you're doing something physical like I had a fight scene with Gary

Busey," she recalled. "I was so worried about really hitting him. When you're around all these guys who've done a million action movies—and I haven't!—I have to get them to slow down and take me through it a step at a time. You have to be comfortable enough with the moves to then be free enough—to just be in the moment. That's really difficult!"

While recounting her scenes with Busey, she described the actor as "really giving and very into it. I

The UNIVERSAL SOLDIERS: Jeff Bridges, West, Matt Battaglia and Gary Busey. "Actors are really afraid of being locked into stereotype," notes West. "But I don't think anyone's going to peg me as 'The Action Girl'."

the action genre. What I liked about this was that it had a sense of humor about itself. It doesn't take itself too seriously. Actually, it's been a much better opportunity than I ever could've imagined: there is the action stuff, but there's also drama and it's very comedic.

"The movie has been challenging in two ways," she said. "In one way, I've played a lot of characters where there was a really strong hook, dramatically—someone whose down and out, or running away from things. This one really draws a lot on my own personality. All roles do to a certain extent, but, with this one, I've had much more opportunity to play and to be comfortable in doing that. I've been comfortable enough to let my real Chandra personality come through, as opposed to hiding behind a character."

Pretty surprising, considering West's initial resistance to the part. Wearing military fatigues and an itchy hat is part of her cosmetic reconstruction of

Veronica, the journalist reprised from the first *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER*. In the '92 release, the heroine was played by Ally Walker—"Dr Sam Waters" on NBC's *PROFILE*—who radiated like a laser beam next to the wooden, foot-in-mouth deliveries of co-stars Van Damme and Dolph Lundgren.

"My character's very cocky and a little sarcastic, and she has a really good sense of humor," noted West. "And I'd like to think I have a bit of a sense of humor, so I've been able to

Jesse Adams, Gordon Currie and West are high strung in *PUPPET MASTER 4* (1998), directed by horror veteran Jeff Bell (*DRIPPING HEADS*, *STEPFATHER*).



think we came up with some pretty neat stuff." Insisting his "wildman" image is justified, West was more unserved by a certain casting quirk: she was the only woman among the film's testosterone-heavy ensemble. Though the boy's club indulged in rapid gunfire, West was at peace with a personal detente. "I don't want to make a [blanket] statement like 'Women are smarter than men,'" she explained. "But what's nice about my character is that she's the one who's thinking about everything, while [the men] are doing all the crazy action stuff."

"What stands out to me," she continued, "is when an action movie doesn't take it-



UNIVERSAL SOLDIER S & M: West and Matt Salinger at cemetery ("The sequels are as much better than the original '92 release. They have a sense of humor about themselves." Jeff Wadlow directs both actors in Toronto locales.

self too seriously; it's so insane and so gratuitous—and over-the-top—that if they can at least laugh about it, then the audience can sit back and [not be disturbed by the violence] because they know it's just fun. It's hard to be offended by something when the people doing it are laughing about it as well."

West subscribes to the concept of "cartoon violence," epitomized by films like DAWN OF THE DEAD and FROM DUSK TILL DAWN, where the carnage is calibrated to match the extravagance and dark humor of Road Runner slapstick. The surfeit of violence in RE-ANIMATOR, drolly directed by Stuart Gordon, inspired a critic to define it as "The Three Stooges in a butcher shop."

"Whether you like it or not," Chandra continued, "these movies cater to an enormous audience." And she realizes that it's not dwindling: "The Depression proved that people want to be entertained," said the 26-year-old actress. During that epoch, plummeting

employment and revenue turned movie theaters into sanctuaries. "And unfortunately or fortunately, action movies have sort of filled that void for people. I don't think that will ever change. I think there's always going to be people out there who aren't happy, or just want some kind of vacation from life. And want something that they don't have to think about too much."

The huge special effects movies will consistently make money. Not every single one, but, for the most part, they will."

With the risk of being upstaged by somersaulting stunt people and detonated vehicles, how does West sell "acting" to the home viewer? "I'd be lying if I didn't say I've had a few days on this show where, at a key moment, I've realized, 'This isn't about me or my acting at all. This is about getting the shot and making it look cool!'"

"But that's the nature of the business," she said philosophically. "And that's what people pay to see. Person-



sally, I like small films." She would later add a disclaimer: "Truthfully, you have to—when you're doing an action movie—throw a little bit of logic out the window. If you question everything, you just drive yourself insane. You're dealing with total science fiction, so you can't analyze everything."

Though stunt women were hired for carefully calculated maneuvers, West was afforded the latitude to personally perform action sequences. "I really only have two fight scenes over the course of the two films and, on both of them, they really only shot a master on each one with a stunt double—and then I did all the close-ups and masters for coverage. I think they'll probably use most of the stuff I did. I think it turned out pretty well, and I don't think they'll need the stunt double shots as much. You know, it's not like I got shot or anything."

Nevertheless, she was injured on the set. "This was stupid because it wasn't a stunt or anything. There was this scene where I had to go through a door [laughing], and that's where I hurt myself. I tripped and it smacked me back in the face, hitting my forehead and teeth. I'm in an action movie and that's how I get hurt [laughing]."

So how did the screenwriters link the second part of UNIVERSAL SOLDIER with the six-year-old Van Damme movie? "We start off the first sequel with Flashback to the original movie. They pick up the story after the final fight scene."

Though her character is not exactly the main character's love interest, West reminded me, "Over the course of the movie, Veronique and Luc do develop a relationship of sorts. It's not entirely a romantic one. I suppose in a grander theme, it's romantic because all they have is each other. She can't go to anybody and he [can't stay with his parents]. I'm a fugitive, so the cops are after me. The government's after me, because I'm allied with him. I'm trying to help Luc. He's trying to help me. So, actually, everybody's is after everybody. Also, my character gets to learn a lot through Luc because he's sort of like a child. So, in teaching him things, she learns about herself and human nature."

CHANDRA WEST

"At first, I had a really bad attitude about it. I'm not a big fan of the action genre, personally."

An actress who adheres to one genre may be imported with typecasting. Will Ms. West be indefinitely tied to *Veronica?* After all, it's a certainty that if *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER II & III* make a lot of loot, West will be called upon to do Parts IV and V. "I think as an actor, everybody's really afraid of being locked into something or stereotyped," she replied. "But I don't think anybody's going to see these movies and then peg me as 'The Action Girl' [laughs]."

Still, if executive producer Kevin Gillis gets his way, a sequel isn't the only thing in the works: there's also the probability of a *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER* syndicated series. So would West have a problem with firing off a few more rounds? "I'd be more open to doing [an action film] now than I was before I did this one," she said. "But it would totally depend on the script. I got lucky in this one because my character, for the most part, is quite well-written and well-rounded."

She quickly added, "I'm definitely not the screaming girl in high heels [laughs]."

A favorite among West's past roles was her Emmy-nominated guest shot on *PICKET FENCES*. She was cast in the "Heart of Saturday Night" episode (10/27/95) as Tina, a small town girl popular in high school, but whose lofty ambitions are squashed because she has no place but to toil in a factory. West had managed to lift herself out of the Hollywood phylum of "just another pretty face." She recalled her post-modeling period as "Frustrating because you'll walk into a room and everyone just rolls their eyes. They're actually surprised, in an audition, if you have brains or talent! That'll never change."

Executive producer Kevin Gillis, hoping to reel-in West for Catalyst Entertainment's *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER* television series, thinks he has an ace up his sleeve: "Peter M. Lenkov wrote the script," explained Gillis. "He did *DEMOLITION MAN*. He did *SPECIES II*, as well. He carries a lot of double entendres into situations." Gillis is confident that the high quality



West and Theresa Hill in *PUPPET MASTER*. The plot involved Gothic and demon lord Zuluk. Both actresses repeated their roles in the '96 sequel, *PUPPET MASTER II*. Last year, the series turned into a toy franchise.

of the scripts will defuse West's resistance to typecasting. We'll keep you posted.

Actually, in retrospect, West's past projects don't even marginally approximate stereotype. Her only other fantasy-related films are a couple of *PUPPET MASTER* installments (Parts IV & V) and a disappearing act called *TOBE HOOPER'S NIGHT TERRORS*. West's more mainstream movies were produced direct-for-television, including *YOUNG AT HEART*, a sentimental tearjerker with Olympia Dukakis and a cameo by the late Frank Sinatra. Her other TV movies include *MADONNA: INNOCENCE LOST, LOVE AND BETRAYAL: THE MIA FARROW STORY* (West played Mariel Hemmingsway) and *A FACE TO DIE FOR*. She's also very visible in a '98 miniseries, *LOVE ON THE LAND* (tentative title), supporting Peter Strauss, Hume Cronyn, Rachel Ward, Rip Torn and Robert

Joy. The show, set in the 1800s, is adapted from a novel titled *The Earth Abides*. A romantic comedy, *THE DUKES*, is scheduled for imminent broadcast; West nailed a leading role. Does this sound like "typecasting" to you?

Chandra West is more than just an attractive leading lady and more than than the cursory dame who sprays bullets. She's a big Woody Allen fan; her eyes light up when she flashes back to sitting right in front of Allen while he played clarinet in his traditional Manhattan club gig. You don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to suspect she'd break a leg for a crack at an Allen movie. And even if the further adventures of *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER* proves commercially prosperous, West won't be selling her soul for action epics. But she may negotiate with the Devil if he talks like Martin Scorsese, Joel Cohen or Quentin Tarantino. And Woody. □

Carrie's girl-next-door stereotype faded w/
DEATH OF A CLOTHED
TRIFOLD (1981). "I
don't know exactly
how I would act in
HALLUCINATION FEVER. It
was look, I wouldn't
pick me as a virgin
bikini actress. Smart
slouch cheerleader
maybe, but I don't
think I personified
virginal babysitters."

HALLOWEEN 20 SCREAMER JAMIE LEE CURTIS

ROOTS: AN AWARD-WINNING ACTRESS, FORMERLY "THE QUEEN OF SCREAM," CELEBRATES ANOTHER HALLOWEEN.

By Douglas Eby

She exits from her car and trots down a street somewhere in an Illinois hamlet called Langdon. Spotting a costume shop peddling Halloween merchandise, she grinds to a halt. "Cat!" Waxing nostalgic, Jamie Lee Curtis smiles wistfully. "This movie has as much of a feel as the first HALLOWEEN movie," she explains. "I was just thinking that HALLOWEEN was about walking down a street with the kids, and the way it was told was with such simplicity—and that's exactly what this has. This scene is so reminiscent of the first movie."

Only six years ago, when *EW* initially interviewed Curtis, she dropped four-letter words while struggling to recall the name of the staffer ("No! Fuck you! I remember! You're Ted! That's you! Goddamn it! I remembered!"). She was effusive, profane, hilarious. Today, she's philosophical, analyzing the ap-



HALLOWEEN HQ: Jamie Lee Curtis reunites with Janet Leigh, her mother/mentor in *Psycho*. "The stuff with my mom turned out to be just great."

peal and longevity of the HALLOWEEN franchise: "It's timeless because being scared is timeless. You've established this predator, and he hasn't gone away. But the basic thing about this woman, this Laurie Strode character, is it's the best part I've ever had, next to Helen Tasker [TRUE LIES]."

Produced on a shoestring (\$325,000), HALLOWEEN domestically grossed \$47 million when it premiered in 1978. Directed by John Carpenter, the film spawned a subgenre of cheaply produced "slasher" movies that invariably subverted Carpenter's "sex begets violence" tract. Laurie Strode, a chaste teenager, eludes the violent execution inflicted upon her promiscuous friends. The self-appointed vindicator is Michael Myers, a.k.a. The Shape, who turns out to be Laurie's brother.

Curtis portrayed Laurie Strode in HALLOWEEN and its 1981 sequel, HALLOWEEN II. Seventeen years after retiring from



"HALLOWEEN was a tremendous way to begin my career. A low-budget, little indie movie. We did it like guerrilla filmmaking, everyone participated together."

stractive as the initial HALLOWEEN, are far from inflated. "That's right, we have a significantly larger budget than the first film," concurs Curtis. "But the whole movie's going to be made for \$15 million—it's not like it's going to cost \$35 million. Fifteen million in today's marketplace would probably have been \$3 million in 1978, so we've upped the ante a little." Director Steve Miner has cut the movie so tightly, we already have 66 minutes of cut footage—and that's as tight as you're going to get. Nothing's been difficult, really, except for just some production nightmares...like night shooting is not fun, it's cold."

Dropping by one of the trailers, Curtis exchanges greetings with veteran actress Janet Leigh (4:4), whose own track record includes THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE, TOUCH OF EVIL and PSYCHO. Leigh, cast in H20 as a librarian, is Curtis' mother; they previously bonded on-screen in another John Carpenter movie, THE FOG (1980). "The stuff with my mom turned out to be just wonderful," gushes Curtis.

Curtis and her mother, Janet Leigh, were paired in THE FOG (1980). "Oh, I also did a LOVE BOAT episode with my mom," remarks Curtis. "...It was a lot of fun."

+

LOVE BOAT



Curtis was paid \$20,000 to portray "Laurie Strode" in HALLOWEEN (78). Cost in HALLOWEEN II ("I think it's a terrible movie"), her salary rose to \$700,000.

role, she returns as Strode in the series' seventh installment, HALLOWEEN-H20 (the film's working title was HALLOWEEN 7: THE REVENGE OF LAURIE STRODE). Curtis notes that an embattled Laurie Strode—hooked on booze and still dreading a surprise reunion with her homicidal brother—struggles with a moral dilemma. "There's a point where Laurie has to make a choice," explains the actress. "She makes it the choice to redeem or avenge her life. There's a point where she can ultimately keep running. But there is a point in your life where you have to stop running, and

that's literally what this movie is about. It's not something that Laurie understands now; it's something she comes to realize in the course of the movie—and it's an instantaneous decision."

She's particularly fond of the irony behind the movie's "blood is thicker than water" tag line: "It's all about the family, it's all about disconnection between the brother and sister, and the nephew and other family members. It all comes together and makes sense why Michael Myers is coming back 30 years later."

Production expenses, though hardly as bee-eat-

She's cut off by Adam Arkin, on sabbatical from CHICAGO HOPE, who's a block away but waves and yells something inaudible. "Adam is fabulous in this movie because his role is so funny," grins Curtis. "And it's a really nice part for him to play because he's in love with my character. He knows Laurie's a mess, but doesn't know why. So he's trying to peel back her onion layers as gently as he can. With someone like Laurie—who's a functioning alcoholic, somebody who's completely parased—you can't peel back the layers too quickly because she'll just run in the other direction. So it's a wonderful counterpoint, because he's so effervescent and funny and loving, and she's this tightly wound clock. It's a really nice combo."

At least one of her ole' gang is back. Curtis points out that Nancy Stephens, who played Nurse Marion in HALLOWEEN and was later married to HALLOWEEN II director Rick Rosenthal, once again plays an angel of mercy. But Curtis declines to feign misty-eyed sentiment over the late

Donald Pleasence who, as "Dr. Samuel Loomis," tried to liquidate The Shape in Parts 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. "In the first movie, as Laurie, I never saw him," says Curtis. "I never knew he existed until the last three minutes of the movie. In the second movie, I still don't know he exists until the last three minutes. I don't know who this man is!"

She feels more of a loss over John Carpenter's absence from the set: he declined to participate in H20. "Not that Steve Miner wasn't my complete choice, and has done a fabulous job," enthuses Curtis. "Obviously, John [HALLOWEEN 1-III producer], Debra Hill and I talked about doing it, and they were both swamped with other things. I think John seriously considered it for a little while, and then didn't have the time to give it the proper due. We all actually walked away from it, and then Miramax came back and said, 'Look, we still want to make the movie even though John and Debra can't really work it out. Do you?' And I said, 'Well, only if [SCREAM screenwriter] Kevin Williamson gets involved.' Because, you know, he's really the guy now, and I wanted his take on it. And he came on board and came up with the story, and picked up the initial writer, Robert Zappia. And then we consulted directors who are associated with horror films. I understand that's why they went to Wes Craven on SCREAM—you know, he can handle it." Steve Miner's genre credits include FRIDAY THE 13TH—Parts 2 & 3, HOUSE and WAHLCK.

Another scene requires Curtis to stroll down the street of an L.A. suburb that invokes a 1960's-type of milieu. I query, "When do we get to the blood and thunder?" and Curtis reminds me that these more sedated scenes "are the high notes of horror movies. It's melody. It's very light and establishing stuff. It's all that stuff of walking and looking,



Curtis in THE FOG. "I did horror films because I was too young, 19 or 20, to turn away work. The characters I played were good people. I didn't have to swear, didn't have to wear tight jeans or bounce my butt. And girls were intelligent women."

and beginning to get a sense of the passage of time. The movie takes place in a day, so the clock is ticking and you know he's going to come out at night. So it's that feeling of being late afternoon... wondering what's going to happen."

A veteran of seven horror films, Curtis whips into discourse on the genre. For maximum impact, the "big

jolt," resists certain scenes that deceptively appear to be mealy shots. But then, catch the audience off guard and—*ukhomp!*—go *corte blanche* with the blood and thunder. I remind her that minimal blood was spilled in the '78 HALLOWEEN. Will Part 7 be equally devoid of graphic violence? "Well, there's a little more than the first one," admits Curtis.

"But it follows the structure of the first one, in that you have to establish the day, establish the characters, their isolation, and then the night comes. And you know and I know that as the sun goes down..."

The film was a reunion for Curtis and Steve Miner: six years ago, they worked together on FOREVER YOUNG, a romantic romp

that was marginally linked to a sci-fi premise. "The thing that Steve is absolutely on the dough about—not unlike John [Carpenter] when I first knew him—is he's the most unassuming guy you could ever meet as a director," rhapsodies Curtis. "He doesn't yell at people. He's very specific about what he wants, but he's a very hang-out guy. You'd think somebody would have to be obsessed to do this work. But what's fascinating is, the original plot of one of the H2O drafts had the same plot as HALLOWEEN, where you these parallel stories going on simultaneously. You had the Laurie Strode story and then you had a cop. They actually hired a very well-known actor—I won't say who—to play this cop. Then, about three weeks before shooting just as Kevin Williamson was polishing the draft, Steve said, 'I want to try a draft without this cop because we've seen it a million-trillion times, where the cop is just one step ahead of the bad guy, and you know they're both going to arrive at the point when everybody's just about to

"Let's do a 20th HALLOWEEN,"
I said. **"GREASE had just been reissued: the same fucking movie 20 years later. I said, 'Let's do a new film that rocks a little bit.'"**



HALLOWEEN. Curtis (R) says, "The script didn't say as much as it could've but John Carpenter knew exactly what he wanted. John and [producer] Debra Hill wrote a part for me in the PG-13 movie [Halloween II]. Nancy Loomis, P.J. Soles and Curtis as The Baby-Sitter's Club. Curtis had hoped that Soles would be cast in H2O."



die—' It was in the first HALLOWEEN movie, and it's been in every subsequent movie and it's in all these other movies—SCREAM included. The 'W' story and the 'B' story. Steve said, 'Let's just make it the 'A' story with two subjects.'

"So it's all in the same location. It's not like, literally, a group of strangers talking

about what's going on, with cops following The Shape. The Shape establishes where he is, and stays there. But I was like, 'What? The guy you cast as the cop was really good. You mean you're not going to hire this guy, now?' You have to pay him? What are you, crazy? I really thought Steve was nuts, but, man, it was absolutely the best call because it just keeps you right here in the movie. You don't need that other character."

One problem Dr Loomis recurrently appeared in the series to fill-in plot exposition: Donald Pleasence reliably mugged through soliloquies that tied-in the latest sequel with its 1978 predecessor. Unfortunately, the actor passed away in 1995. "They tried very seriously to resurrect a Loomis character, someone telling the audience what you need to know about where everybody's been," relates Curtis. "And instead, when we were discussing it, we said let's make a scene between myself and 'Will,' Adam Arkin's character, where Laurie basically tells Will the back story. And I think it's chronicled in a wonderful way, that scene plays fabulously. Just creepy enough, just emotional enough, just romantic enough."

"The first time I read it, I burst into tears and said, 'Oh, it's going to be so sad.' And Steve said, 'No, no. We're going to play this the absolute opposite of that. It's like a sex game, and we're going to try to play this as long as possible so you can keep it light.' And Adam brings all of that to the table. You could play this very heavy—I'm not who you think I am.' But if played melodramatically, it would have been just horrific."

Curtis describes Laurie Strode, two decades after the night HE came home, as "a kind of repressed, closeted person. Everybody else is wild and crazy. But the way she operates, of course, is internally. I fought every draft where



Berkley was initially rendered into a glamorous icon for the Japanese debut of *PROM NIGHT* ("got to dance?"). The \$1.6 million production, one of three banner films that *Curtain* made in 1980, spawned 3 sequels.



Laurie was kind of bubbly, and I fought for every gulp of booze she puts in her body. She does, however, make a very conscious choice not to run anymore when a certain something occurs. I won't tell you how and why, but Laurie has the opportunity to get away and she doesn't take it."

Quite content with the film's progress, Curtis flashes a pearly smile and enthuses, "I'm totally into this, it's totally great." Her only regret is that P.J. Soles, who played flirtatious Lynda in the pioneering HALLOWEEN, wasn't cast in H2O: "It's because I want to return to the series' first movie. It was completely my thought to come back and do this again; nobody came to me to suggest it. And I want it to be good."

"I went to John [Carpenter], Debra [Hill] and McCormick and said, 'Let's do a 20th HALLOWEEN.' You know, GREASE had just been released; the same fucking movie 20 years later. I said, 'Let's make a movie 20 years later, call it H2O, have it be a completely new movie that celebrates and honors the first one—but, at the same time, rocks a little bit.'

Admitting she hasn't screened Parts 3 to 6 of the series, Curtis offers her own abridged review of HALLOWEEN II: "It stinks. It's a terrible, terrible movie. We watched it the other night. It stinks. I should never have done it. I only did it because I was honoring John and Debra because they wrote it. And it was honoring the audience because it was picking up from the moment the first one let off."

You'd think the former Queen of Scream would be more than tolerant of the genre, but she curtly opines, "I don't like these movies. I'm the farthest thing from a core audience. They scare

continued page 80

Laurie Holden as Lynda in *H2O: The Sea Within*; **R** Laurie Holden as Dorothy (Sharon) in *Death of a Centerfold* (1978), a real-life horror story. **L** As Laurie Shrike, teacher of an all girls school; the tease-off with *The Shrike* in *H2O*.



A "terrified" Cuttie performed her first nude scenes for the European cast of a TV movie, *BEATLES OF A CENTURION*. "I asked her 'Are you going to be nervous?' It had to be said if they're gonna be shot standing up straight."

H2O'S JODI LYN O'KEEFE

THE "NASH BRIDGES" TEEN STAR ON HORROR, SOAPS & CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

By DOUGLAS EBY

Shooting her fourth season of *NASH BRIDGES*—she's cast as “Cassidy,” Doc Johnson’s adolescent daughter on the series—Jodi Lyn O’Keefe insists *HALLOWEEN: H2O* introduced her to a more dissident teen. “My *H2O* character, Sarah, dresses in crazy clothes and she has blue streaks in her hair. And she’s kind of a wise-ass. Cassidy is a bit more down to Earth. I guess they’re both kind of rebellious. They’re both pretty independent girls. Cassidy’s just a little bit more subdued. It’s just that Sarah—with her quirky little comments—sound like so much fun to do.”

Sarah is one of four friends, enrolled at the private high school tormented by Laurie Strode/Keri Tate (Jamie Lee Curtis), who pull out of a camping trip to privately party-on. O’Keefe, who’s screened some of the footage, gauges the roughly cut scenes as “wonderful! I love a good horror film—I mean, everybody loves that little adrenaline rush and likes to be scared every now and again.”

The 19-year-old actress, who plays Sarah as a sweet-16 seductress, is “doubly excited with *H2O* because it’s my movie debut.” So how does prime time compare to her previous tenure on *ANOTHER WORLD*, an afternoon soap? “It was grueling work—without soaps, we film all day, doing one whole episode. It was great training for me. But now, I just really want to try it all. I don’t want to do anything that’s exploitive or gratuitous, like taking your clothes off just to get people

to see a movie. That’s not what I’m interested in.”

O’Keefe considers *H2O* a subliminal breeding ground of teen angst. “Like Molly (Michelle Williams) and her relationship with her father—he doesn’t send payments, which she needs. My character’s problems were everyday life things: like kids trying to sneak-in a party and bringing out the wine when they’re underage. All kids do these kind of things. When I was doing the film, it felt like when I was back in school—except for all the slashing and gore. It seemed very familiar to me, like having a uniform on again. I went to Catholic school for two years and I remembered lots of the same things.”

O’Keefe describes her TV series as “so much more fast-paced. We do an hour show in seven days. But we did *H2O* in a matter of months—you do two or three scenes a day. The pace was much nicer. We had more time to work, to get the shot right and the lighting, and it’s a lot more detailed. It



O’Keefe: “Doing *H2O* absolutely thrilled me. I love a good horror film. I want to do more movies, but I don’t want to do anything exploitative or gratuitous.”

was a new experience for me. I had only so much dialogue a day, and had more time to concentrate on what I was doing.”

Drifting back to Sarah, she notes the character appealed to her because, “I liked her wit, and there was great dialogue to bring that out. What proved challenging was all the horror, the Michael Myers thing. To pretend that you’re that scared is a difficult thing, but I absolutely loved it. It’s escapism. You do things that, hopefully, will never happen to me in my lifetime. But it was a great release of emotion. I would go home at night completely just drained. It’s definitely therapeutic for me.”

To date, O’Keefe has declined acting classes. Her agent counseled, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” But, if somehow afforded leisure time, she’ll “take a class just to see. Because I’ve never done that, it has to be helpful. I could do some night classes while I’m in L.A. I read so much. You can’t get a book out of my hands. The only problem is that lately, I haven’t been able to read any books, because I’ve been reading so many scripts.” □

H2O: O’Keefe collides with adult authorities Jamie Lee Curtis and Adam Arkin. “What proved challenging was the horror, the Michael Myers thing I loved.”



HALLOWEEN 20

NANCY STEPHENS

BACK & SMOKIN', SHE DROPS A CLUE—"MAYBE NOBODY WILL SEE"—ABOUT THE MARION/LOOMIS RELATIONSHIP.

BY DOUGLAS EBY

Nancy Stephens is back as Nurse Marion, whom she introduced in HALLOWEEN and reprised in the '81 sequel. "Nurse Marion, just short of Nurse Ratched, sustains her personality in HALLOWEEN: H20," says Stephens. "She's probably become more cynical. Life has not been kind to our Nurse Marion [laughs]. She was sort of caring and innocent in the first film and HALLOWEEN II, but she's quite hardened in this latest one. When they asked me to do H20, I looked at the first HALLOWEEN and was shocked that I was smoking so much. I was a smoker then, I'm not now. And I didn't realize my character was somewhat appalled that Dr. Loomis wanted to lock up Michael Myers without any thought of rehabilitation."

With offspring of her own, Stephens "always recycles" her HALLOWEEN films every October 31st. "And they're always on some cable channel. Kids will say to children, 'That's your mom!'" Prior to her movie debut in HALLOWEEN, Stephens cut her teeth on a couple of soaps (*DAYS OF OUR LIVES* and *BRIGHT PROMISE*), supporting veteran actors like Dana Andrews (*LAURA*, *CURSE OF THE DEMON*). "It was the first time they were trying to put old movie stars back to work for a certain audience," recalls Stephens.

Then she snaps into a HALLOWEEN flashback, circa '78, recalling, "Everyone was so young, [Director] John Carpenter [producer] Debra Hill, Debra and I are on the board of an en-



Two years later, Stephens still makes house calls—but she may be unmasked by her latest patient's identity. "Marion is now sly, dark & cynical."

vironmental group called the Earth Communication Office."

One catalyst for Stephens' attachment to H20 was a friendship with HALLOWEEN past. "Jamie Lee Curtis' kids and my kids go to school together, and Jamie mentioned—months and months ago—the '88 sequel, asking if I might want to do it. She's wonderful. And you know, her mom [Janet Leigh] is in H20 and they are so close together. And she has all these subtle references to PSYCHO. So it has an anchor to it."

Stephens also admires H20 director Steve Miner. "He was great in the meeting. And I thought bringing Nurse Marion back would be a wonderful kind of closure. I work sporadically. There are other things that take up much of my time, environmental issues and politics—and, for middle-aged actresses, they're not beating the doors down." Lately, she appeared as a

guest on ALLY McBEAL and BEVERLY HILLS, 90210.

"The H20/Nurse Marion is a pleasure," says Stephens. "She's dour, she's early, she smokes. It's fun to play someone who's dark and cynical. And the kids who play the teenage boys were adorable." Stephens admits her character isn't afforded much background. "But the public will fill in the blanks. I look reasonably enough like who I used to be 20 years ago. Nobody's going to say, 'Who is that?'

Stephens cautions there's an H20 sequence that "maybe nobody will see, when the Steadcam is scanning an area of Marion's office. There are pictures of me with Donald Pleasance ('Dr. Loomis'), from another time and place. There's just this undercurrent that maybe she was more than a nurse. But clearly, I've found a quiet life for myself, trying to put the past behind me. But, with HALLOWEEN, the past is never behind."

The rough edited H20 footage I've seen looks really good. Steve is a talented director and his DP is just great. So if it does what SCREAM did, I'll be on people's minds a little more than I am right now." Not exactly a horror fan, Stephens finally rented SCREAM "because of doing H20. I'm known in my circle for the most ridiculously obscure films. If it's Casablanca, and three and a half hours long and moves slowly, I'm in heaven. What generally puts other people to sleep is my cup of tea." □

HALLOWEEN 20

MICHELLE WILLIAMS

REFLECTIONS OF THE "DAWSON'S CREEK" ACTRESS: JAMIE LEE CURTIS, HORROR VS. SLASHER FILMS, BOOKS & THE DARK SIDE.

BY DOUGLAS EBY

She made her film debut in *LASSIE* (1994) and then, the following year, crossed-over into science fiction. Warping into *TIMEMASTER*, about a roguish virtual reality, she was subsequently cast as *SPECIES*' "Young Sili," the hybrid who rapidly matures into Natascha Hensbridge. A few roles later, Michelle Williams was cast as "Jen Lindley" in *DAWSON'S CREEK*, the WB series created by *SCREAM* screenwriter Kevin Williamson. When I caught up with her, Williams was promoting HALLOWEEN 20 on the talk show circuit, tipping-off Regis and Kathie Lee that it wasn't easy to scream on cue. Co-written by the prolific Williamson, *H20* has been a hot button the Web as early as December '97. Williams was cast as Molly, a student enrolled at a private school that's officiated by Laura Stride (who's camouflaged under a "Keri Tate" pseudonym). Stride is reprised by Jamie Lee Curtis, who played the character in *HALLOWEEN* (1978) and *HALLOWEEN II*.

"Molly is smart and independent, very parallel to what Jamie's original character used to be," says Will-



Michelle Williams and Katie Holmes (P. 54, residents of DAWSON'S CREEK. "I was attracted to my character for her dark side and what she's been through."

iams. "She's at the school on a scholarship. Her parents don't have a whole lot of money, and she isn't really in contact with them. So she's sort of making it on her own. She's a lot different from what Jamie's character has now transformed into—an alcoholic, who's screwed up by her psycho serial-killer brother The Shape."

Not that Molly hasn't got her own problems. "She's challenged further into the movie. Basically, her life flashes before her eyes. Generally, she's a demure, sweet girl and then—with the circumstances that oc-

cur—it makes her face a lot of those demons, and a lot of things she's never had to deal with, from leaving such a sheltered existence."

The 18-year-old Williams was drawn to the film "because, first, I wanted to work with Jamie Lee. And, second of all, it's a very different character than what I play on DAWSON'S CREEK. I was attracted to Jen for her dark side and what she's been through—and where it's taken her and how it's affected her, and who she is because of it. Those are the roles that always seem to interest me,

the ones with a past... with a depth, something lurking behind the surface that you aren't quite sure what it is. And, once the layers are peeled away, there's a phenomenal story there."

In contrast, her *H20* heroine "is not the same sort of world-weary, wise old soul. She's very young and innocent. There's a real beauty that comes out of naivete, and I found that interesting. And I thought it would be fun to take off, and do some action stunts and screaming. That's good for the soul and a huge release, I'm telling you."

She's already screened HALLOWEEN, the '78 progenitor that launched the franchise. "I was really impressed with it," nods Williams. "I think that it was incredibly effective, and far ahead of its time. It really is pretty much what started the whole genre. I've seen a lot of what Jamie Lee is famous for, like *TRUE LIES* and that sort of thing, but I've also seen a few other, lesser-known things she did that impressed me—like *THE HEIDI CHRONICLES* and some other stuff. I was really excited to work with her. I had no idea, going into it, how amazing it would turn out to be, or what she was like—and she's truly a



Holly Williams and Jason Ritter in *Laurie Strode* is being stalked by The Shape. The film appealed to Williams because, "I wanted to work with Jamie Lee [Curtis]. And it's a very different character from what I play on *DAWSON'S CREEK*."

remarkable woman. I have a tremendous amount of respect for her. At three in the morning, when everybody's energy is lagging, Jamie is always there, always excited and instills a sense of life and purpose into each scene. She's a phenomenal presence to have on the set."

Referring to Curtis' comments about Laurie Strode—specifically, the sensitive portrayal of her instauration—Williams notes, "I think that's one of the most interesting things about this script. In a lot of slasher scripts I've read or seen recently there isn't a whole lot of character development...because, mainly, it's a slasher flick. But it really impressed me, in this movie, how much they fleshed out Jamie Lee's character and how much I cared what was going on with her."

Does she dig bogeymen and cheap thrills? "I do it every day driving in Los Angeles," Williams laughs. "Absolutely, what's great about this film is that it's a rush. And it's pure, unadulterated, fabulous escapism. And we all need that. Whether you get it through books, through music, through film, it's an absolute necessity in life."

As a high school student,

Williams trained in an Advanced Placement program, graduating at age 16. "It was great because I could work at my own pace, and it was completely uninterrupted. I finished three years in eight months.

"For as long as I can remember, my father has read voraciously. I grew up with William Faulkner and all these great books, and I always wanted to be in those worlds. And growing up, I lived in these fantasies of whatever it was—Anne Karenina or, you name it, I wanted to be there. So it was a natural progression to want to become an actress, to live that out."

So does she still find time to read? "Oh God, yes," grins Williams. "Even if I don't get any sleep, it's a huge part of my life. I think it's really enlightening thing, and being read to as a child was the best thing that could have happened to me."

Hence, she could relate to Jamie Lee Curtis' HALLOWEEN character, a bookworm who reassures her education may intimidate guys. Furthermore, Curtis stuck it to The Shape in the series' first film. "I was drawn to her intellect and how sharp she was, and that she was-

"We're making a horror film, not *SLING BLADE*. *H2O* is pure escapism. We need it. Whether you get it through books or film, it's an absolute necessity in life."

a't the helpless victim. She stood up and kicked ass. For me, it's living out another fantasy it's being an action hero, and that's one facet that interests me. But now that I've done it, I'm going to do whatever else I want to live out."

Williams admits that Molly may be bereft of the development afforded Laurie Strode but "we're making a horror film. This isn't the time for it to be *SLING BLADE*. The objective here is to scare the pants off the audience; face it, going into my character's family life—and whatever tormented her in childhood—wouldn't scare you."

She's really scared of DICK, her latest project—about two women, separated from a White House tour, who meet Richard Nixon—because political satire is unique to her career. "It's always frightened me, so I felt it was a challenge to take on." In lieu of a pig, she prizes co-star Kirsten Dunst ("Fabulous") and director Andrew Fleming, who previously helmed THE CRAFT ("He's bright, insightful").

Williams candidly admits one resource of her DAWSON'S CREEK popularity is prisons: "That seems to be my big draw. I get a lot of inmate mail, I get a lot of 12-year-old boy mail, and then there's a huge part that's teenage girls. Between the two characters Joey (Katie Holmes) and Jen, I think the audience appeal to Joey is broader, they can relate—but there's a group of teenagers who really empathize with Jen. The group is a lot smaller, because Joey represents almost a typification of high school angst. But I've gotten some very specific personal letters

from teenage girls who absolutely understand Jen. That's been great, really affirming."

Williams cut her teeth on theatre. Will she return to the stage? "I'd forgotten about it for quite a while and then, a month ago, I was doing something on stage, and I remembered why I got into this and what it was that fired me up about doing this work. I love doing stage work and, on hiatus, I'd rather go work for a hundred bucks a week in some gritty, dirty theater."

She compares the movie and stage mediums favorably. "You can make different choices as long as it sticks with that through line, and you can add nuances—as long as it stays true to that. So both are great to explore and to grow; both are great to make risky choices." □

Williams, as "Young Jen" in SPICER, was visible in the movie & TV trailers. Her first off-fair: TIMEMASTER (96).



Space Trucker Debi Mazar

THOUGH CAST IN EXTRAVAGANT SCI-FI EPICS, MAZAR IS STILL THE QUEEN OF CULT. DOES SHE WANT TO ABDICATE?

BY CHAUNCE HAYDEN

"The hair is a swoosh of raven black that descends from a razor-sharp Morticia Addams widow's peak. The eyebrows arch impossibly in a sort of retro salute to Norma Desmond. And that voice—well, description seems futile...meet Debi Mazar." —Entertainment Weekly

Kindly add to that description hot makeup, sharp clothes, glitzy jewelry and enough charisma to fill a zeppelin hanger. It was a little over a decade ago that the Queens-born, Manhattan-bred Mazar was working as a respected makeup artist by day and a doorman at Manhattan's Mudd Club by night. Have times changed. Today, Mazar can boast to her East Village pals that she happens to be the only one on the block whose maniseries, WITNESS TO THE MOR, climbed to the top of the Nielsen charts during a spring '86 session that

"SPACE TRUCKERS kicks ass," wrote critic Harry Knowles. Cast in Stuart Gordon's sci-fi mega, Mazar was cast as Cindy, a perky space truckstop waitress; her character is assaulted by Capt. Macanudo, a rabid space hijacker (Charles Bronski).

was, well, already mobbed with underworld venues.

The cancellation of her own CBS sitcom, last year's TEMPORARILY YOURS ('97), hardly soured the 34-year-old actress to the medium. Mazar was cast as a New York working girl. Episode #1 had her putting makeup on a stiff, the second had her taking dictation for an erotic novelist. Not a far stretch from the real former working girl's past. But Mazar's toughest job was jiggled off-camera. CBS scrapped the original pilot, advising her writer, exec producer, and series grandmother to exit stage left. Even her television apartment was hyped up from a real life, roach-infested flat to a luxurious palace. The public didn't buy it. The show was axed after only six episodes aired. But it was no soon off Mazar's nose, "living hi-coastal," she dropped back into movies.

Seven years earlier, Mazar made an auspicious film debut as Ray Liotta's cootiehead mistress in GOODFELLAS. She subsequently appeared in films helmed by both A-list and lauded independent directors, including Jodie Foster (LITTLE MAN TATE), Woody Allen (BULLETS OVER BROADWAY), Spike Lee





Sugar (Steve Buscemi) and **Spice** (Mozart shell Tyne-Pace) (Savanna Lee Jones) in **BATMAN**. PGR. **EVERY**. Jim Byrley noted in his HBO review that "Babymillers and **Mozart**...on the two 'chicks,' tend to get lost in the elaborate set decoration."



"I do lots of independent & commercial films by earning respect— You don't book jobs at Hollywood parties. Anyone who tries it that way is stupid."

(JUNGLE FEVER), Stuart Gordon (SPACE TRUCKERS), Allan Moyle (EMPIRE RECORDS) and Cameron Crowe (RINGTONES). Exempting BATMAN FOREVER, Mazar's more mainstream and genre-related films—HUSH, TOYS, CASPER: A SPIRITED BEGINNING—were greeted with indifference. Then again, Debi Mazar's support group wonder if her soul could survive implementation into a Hollywood psyche...

So how does it feel to be the most famous graduate of the Robert Fiance Beauty School?

(Laughs) It feels good! Actually, I don't think I am the most famous. There have been a few hairdressers from there who have gone on to become pretty famous. It's funny, I'm still friends with the people who I went to school with from there.

It didn't happen for you overnight but when it did happen, it happened big. Do you have a sense of your star rising so to speak?

I don't see it that way, I've

Cast as Sugar in BATMAN FOREVER, Mazar (l) shared time w/ Jim Carrey's Puddin' (r). But independent movies afforded her more screen visibility.





SPACE TRUCKERS. Moyer sits in Capt. Maserati's boudoir. If Bernie Wrightson's pre-production art depicts a hostile Master discerning the lonely android.

been working for many years at this and I've been doing a lot of different things film-wise. I've played all types of characters and it's been a real learning process, but I've never really felt that I've arrived. Maybe that's just my insecurities speaking but I just don't feel it. Even when I was making *TEMPORARILY YOURS*, I still felt like I was walking on eggshells. Even when I

was uncertain whether the series would be picked up or not, I was still going on auditions, looking for a job.

Here I thought you were set for life.

That's how it is. People have this perception that you've arrived and that you're a millionaire. Meanwhile, I'm out on the street trying to get some work! It's kind of funny. But I have a lot of drive to find more





"Physically, I don't try changing anything. The grass is always greener in some departments, but I'm not too hung up on that kind of shit."

week and to play more challenging parts.

You seem like the driven type.

I am to a degree. I'm not willing to kiss ass in Hollywood but I do like to work.

Besides, who needs television when your film career is doing so well?

I do lots of different types of movies. I do lots of independent films and commercial films when I can book them. I just need to work to maintain this lifestyle!

Tell me about this lifestyle of yours?

Actually, I live pretty humbly. I don't even own anything yet.

Except for shoes, I understand.

Yes, except for shoes. I also live on both coasts and I have a car payment. I'm just like anybody else. It's pretty humble living actually.

Since you grew up for a short time in Queens, then in Brooklyn, I have a question for you: what separates a city girl from a Jersey girl?

Nothing.

I was under the impression that city girls were tougher.

It's like any other place in the world. New Yorkers have a little bit more of an urban sense but they're just people from a place?

You initially made your mark as a makeup artist to many stars, including Sandra Bernhard and Madonna to name a few.

Make sure you put it in your article that I did that a

MAYER & DAVIS' DRAZENOVIC'S alter ego in BATMAN FOREVER. "I don't want to be the reigning New York girl. I just want people to be entertained."

decade ago. In fact, it was over a decade ago.

Are you uncomfortable about discussing that period of your life?

Actually, it's flattery because people always want to discuss what you did before you were acting. At least I have something interesting to talk about. That's how I see it at this point. I don't see it as a bad thing. The only problem I have is they don't mention it's been a really long time since I did makeup. I don't want to sound like an over-night success—which I'm not, unfortunately.

From makeup artist to actress. How did becoming a makeup artist help you get into acting?

The only plus in having done hair and makeup, prior to my acting career, is that it helped me in creating my own characters. I got into the business in a very normal way. I went to acting school for about four years before I even had an agent. It wasn't like I just did hair and makeup, and a director suddenly said, "Hey, why don't you jump in the film?"

It doesn't ever work that way. You don't book jobs working in another profession. You have to earn people's respect. It's not like you can book jobs in parties. Anyone who thinks that way is stupid.

So you don't do the Hollywood network thing?

Well, it's good to network to a degree but you don't book an acting role from going to a party. Sure, a makeup artist may get a part as somebody who does makeup in the background—with no dialogue—but it's not like you're going to get hired to do any real acting. That's kind of a silly perception.

Were you ever intimidated by another celebrity?

No, people don't intimidate me.

See, you are a tough girl from New York.

Yes, I guess I am tough. I don't think "intimidate" is



SPACE TRACKERS: T. W. Denee Hopper & Stephen Dorff / Seducing Dorff, here in *Destination Moon*, left. MacKenzie Davis' futuristic, zero-grav physique.



the right word; "in awe" is more like it. To be honest, I only did a handful of celebs during my brief career as a makeup artist. But the press loves to blow it up and make it more glamorous than it was. The truth be told, I fucking hated it.

Well, one celebrity to whom you applied makeup became a close friend. I'm referring, of course, to Madonna. Do you hate it when people ask you about your relationship with her?

No, it's just one of the questions that everybody asks. I'm getting used to it.

I read somewhere that you hate Hollywood parties.

I don't go to Hollywood parties.

Your New York accent is a trademark. Has anyone ever encouraged you to lose it for professional reasons?

On movies, yeah, sure. If I'm going to play a lawyer or

a character who's not from New York—then, yeah, I have to be able to speak without it. I can lose it for an audition, but, for an entire movie, I have to work on it. I work with a speech coach—I always have.

Reviewers have noted similarities between yourself and Fran Drescher (*THE NANNY*), what with the nasal delivery and physical appearance. Both of you—literally back-to-back—shot TV spots together to promote year six this fall year.

It doesn't bother me because I think that Fran is very talented. But I also think that we are very, very different. And I don't think that we sound alike. We have very different careers.

So you don't feel like you're Drescher's shadow?

Not at all. I have my own identity and my own career. I don't want to corner that

market. I started a career by playing New Yorkers and I've showed Hollywood that I can play other things. I've done over 30 movies ranging from drama to light comedy. So I don't want to be the reigning New Yorker girl. That's not important to me.

You were cast in *SHE'S SO LOVELY* with John Travolta and Sean Penn. What was it like working with Hollywood's "nicest and 'baddest'?"

What do you mean by *baddest*?

Sean Penn is well known for his quick temper.

Sean Penn is the ultimate professional. He's a brilliant actor. The same with John Travolta. We had a great time. I loved working with them.

You played a post-op transsexual in *THINGS I NEVER TOLD YOU*. Didn't you tell a reporter, "I think I was a man in another life?"

Oh yeah, I forgot about that one! Well, maybe I was, who knows? Maybe I was a queen. In fact I probably was a queen. See think?

Yup. Now that I think about it, that really was a fun role.

You've worked with so many celebrated directors. Which one impressed you the most?

People always ask me that, but, as far as I'm concerned, everybody is different. I'm very impressed with everybody...or very unimpressed.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

(Long pause) I wish I could be more patient. I would like to learn to be more patient. I'm working on that. Physically, I don't try to change anything. I mean this is the package I was given, so be it.

Well, you should be very pleased with your package.

Yeah, it works. The grass is always greener in some departments, but I'm not too hung up on that kind of shit.



Samantha Allen (*EMBRACE OF THE VAMPIRE*) is among the residents of HOT SPRINGS MOTEL, a Showtime sitcom that may turn into "central casting" for director Samantha Phillips (*PHANTASM II & III*) plays a landlady.

FATALE ATTRACTIOnS

continued from page 8

"I'll be singing, making a record with this rock group, The Bloodsuckers. We're kind of like The Spice Girls, only with an edgier vibe." Miles has been encouraging us to write as much original music as possible. I haven't met the other girls in the band yet, but I hope they're all cool to work with." Producers are optimistic and there's already talk of a sequel.

■Independent filmmaker Phillip Cabilio is producing and directing his own screenplay, **EVIL DESIRE**, which he describes as "an erotic horror thriller. We're in the process of casting right now. If you're familiar with your Arthurian legend, you'll remember the character of Morgan Le Fey, who was Merlin the Magi-

cian's half-sister. She was an evil sorceress. I always thought that character was interesting and not explored terribly well, so I took the story some 1500 years into the future and created a character named Desirae Le Fey—'Desire' for short. She's a supernatural human being who has sustained her youth and her power by literally seducing and draining evil men of their evil. The man then crumbles to dust. She's a very evil character. The theme of the story is, if you're dealing with someone who gets rid of evil, should you intervene because what they're doing is wrong?"

■Sheeri Rappaport (5512), who ranked #48 in our "Sci-Fi's Sexiest '97," is off to New Zealand for a role in **XENA**. She plays an Amazonsian warrior, and we promised to leak

nothing more than this tidbit.

■So now that the "erotic thriller" genre is officially declared dead, what's a starlet to do? They're checking into **HOT SPRINGS MOTEL**, a Showtime series, produced by Jim Sudelson and Ann Correll, that merges sex & sleight. Samantha Phillips (*PHANTASM II & III*) is one half a sister/brother duo who inherit a hotel and its whisky inhabitanter. Merry misdeeds include Avalon Anders, a former Swedish Bikini Teamster, and Samantha Allen (*EMBRACE OF THE VAMPIRE*). Step me if you heard this one but—in one of the episodes—Phillips'

randy brother (Robert Abramson) tries to "find accommodations" for a busload of cheerleaders. Chaos ensues! Step, my sides are splitting. □

KARA STYLER

continued from page 27
screen personality

But business has been boozing for "just plain naked" Kara Styler. The photo kept ringing Another file offer from Surrender Cinema.. Ladd Vance, producer of **EMBRACE OF THE VAMPIRE**—the erotic melodrama that prompted Alyssa Milano to shed more than her virtuous image—was pitching a role in his **EROTIC CONFESSIONS** cable series...London Night president Everett Hartman was tailoring a comic book for Styler. "It's called *Safari Sirens*," explained Hartman. "It's a combination of photos and art renderings of Kara as a cavewoman who's lost in a red hot, tropical jungle. She doesn't wear much more than a pith helmet and ragged clothes that she's stripped down into a teeny, makeshift bikini. And she's literally good enough to eat everything—cannibals, woman-eating plants, mutant lobsters—want to serve up Kara as curvaceous cuisine. Anyone who wants a preview can call [see page 68]."

The moral? Typecasting can be fun and profitable (and also "very temporary," according to insiders). So what happens when Styler passes into Hollywood's "golden years" (i.e. age 30)? "After a while, I wouldn't mind going back to Indians," she sighed. "I'd do what all my friends did when I was 18: get married and have children. But that will be later in life." □

JAMIE LEE CURTIS

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me. It's the job I got, but I don't like them at all." Scary theme park rides are also a turn-off. "I don't get adrenaline hits off of fear."

But she doesn't discount the Carpenter-directed **HALLOWEEN**. Curtis was cast in the B-film not long after her single-season sitcom, **OPERATION PETTICOAT** was scrubbed by the ABC network. "And it was a tremendous way to begin my career," Curtis grins. "A low-budget, little indie movie. We did it like guerrilla film-

LETTERS

TALES FROM THE PIT

Enjoyed your interviews with Ingrid Pitt (13, 63), the grand dame of British horror classics (*THE WICKER MAN, HOUSE THAT DRIPPED BLOOD*). One year ago, I met this actress at a Chiller Theatre convention—and I was stunned. A quarter century after *THE VAMPIRE LOVERS*, Ingrid is still spellbinding. She mentioned something about writing a film book. Did this ever come to fruition and, if affirmative, will it find a home in America?

Terry Kim
Providence, RI

(The actress has applied the finishing touches to the *Ingrid Pitt Bedtime Companion for Vampire Lovers*. Notes one speculator, "Drawing on her unique experience of filmmaking with Hammer, Av�ues and other leading horror studios, Ingrid uncovers the fascinating relationship between the cinema vampire and its origins." Director Ken Russell and *LAW OF THE WHITE WOMAN, THE DEVILS* furnished the foreword. For further info on the book, which has been endorsed by James Herbert, check out Ms. Pitt's web site (far right).)

FF & THE AIR FORCE

I gotta hand it to you, you folks have got a pretty nice mag, there I am 24 years old, and in the Air Force, and have been digging in your magazine since it first hit the newsstands. I also believe it has made me a better person. Okay, maybe not, but you can't discount the fact that when I'm at work, and someone has a question about what movie an actress made before she hit the big time, they quite often come to me. And I owe this vast amount of trivial knowledge to FF. So keep up the good work, and keep bringing us the most beautiful women of the silver screen.

Jason C. Rankin
Del City, OK

JERI RYAN

Thank you for the great article on Jeri Ryan, the beautiful Borg (Seven of Nine) on *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*. I fell in love with your front cover photo of Ryan (7:2), and the pic-

tures of Jeri/Seven transforming from Borg to human are awesome. One can only draw from her interview that she's not only an extremely impressive actress but also a great mom.

A shot in the arm for the *STAR TREK* saga, Jen Ryan will stretch that legacy into the next century. Jen, you're one Borg that I wouldn't mind being in a holodeck with. You go, girl!

Eric Isaac
Washington, DC

A CANDLE FOR SCULLY

As an avid Scully fan, I'm grateful to Paula Vitaria for her stinging criticism of *THE X-FILES* Christmas two-part (FF 6:12). Why? Because "A Christmas Carol" and "Emily" seemed designed for the sole purpose of torturing Scully in the wake of her abortion. Having already learned that she was sterilized during her "Assassination" disappearance, she now learns that she conceived a child against her will as well—just in time to watch that child die. As if that weren't terrible enough for her, the story also has her child die at Christmas while her nephew is being born. And in the cruellest twist of all, Mulder decides not to help Emily with the means at his disposal, his deliberate inaction "justified" by Scully's completely out-of-character statement that Emily would be better off dead. This assertion is apparently supposed to shift the blame for Emily's death from Mulder to her, because in the confession scene in "All Souls," Scully's now blaming herself for withholding Emily's treatment (OT). In short, the writers of these episodes seemed bent on aggravating Scully's emotional pain due to the discovery and death of her daughter by any means available, no matter how unbelievable.

I just want to get Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz into a room and ask them, "What's going on here?" Why is Scully being hurt so badly in a way only a woman can be hurt? Why is her reproductive freedom being stolen from her



She is Britain's ferocious horror sovereign Ingrid Pitt, aka *COUNTESS DRACULA*, has steadily written the book on vampire movies.

by both the conspirators and her partner, Mulder (who hasn't returned her extractedova to her, I've noticed)? Why is the abduction storyline, originally designed to give Gillian Anderson time off to have her baby, being used to deprive the character she portrays of her child after making the conception of that child as unnatural and traumatic as possible? I have no idea why, but I find it hard to believe that it's all a coincidence. And I suspect we may never know.

Keep up the great work, folks. And light a candle for Dana Scully—I think she's going to need it.

Andrew Massi Jones II
Baltimore, VA

MEYER: BOOST OR BUST?

I'm researching Russ Meyer for my term paper. Dan Sippelrot's interview with the filmmaker (6:10/11) offered a surface of uncensored anecdotes. Meyer's comments on actress Uschi Digard (*CHERRY HARRY & RAQUEL SUPERVIXENS*), probably his most popular ensemble player, were shocking. Is Uschi still active? What was her reaction to *Rose's* candid comments?

Helen Daley
Berkeley, CA

(Ms. Digard "woman" skinned"

with Meyer's revelations. Notes Philip Pepper, her chronicler: "Though she retired from film in 1990, Uschi did a photo shoot last January. She lives in California, but travels extensively in her work. I have never spoken to Uschi, but she always writes me back, even sending my wife a card on her 50th birthday. She's currently working as a consultant to a wealthy family." Tap into <http://uschi.myosite.com/tribute.htm>

FAN CLUBS

Send self-addressed and stamped envelopes, if you wish a reply.

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